

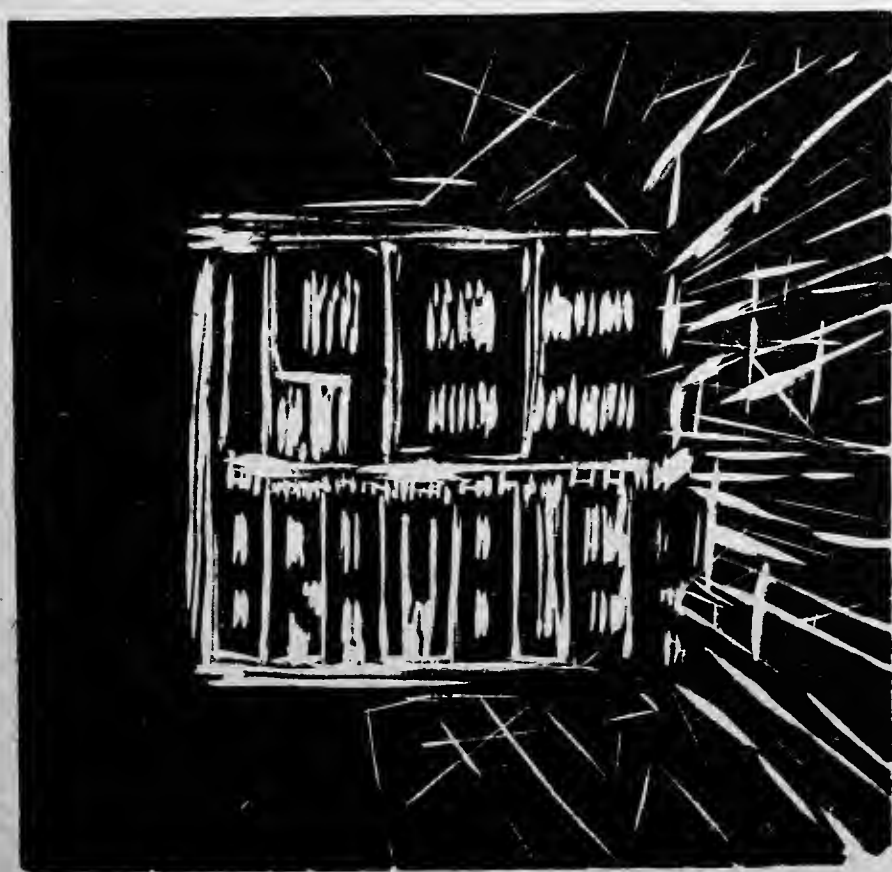
SWEET BRIAR COLLEGE

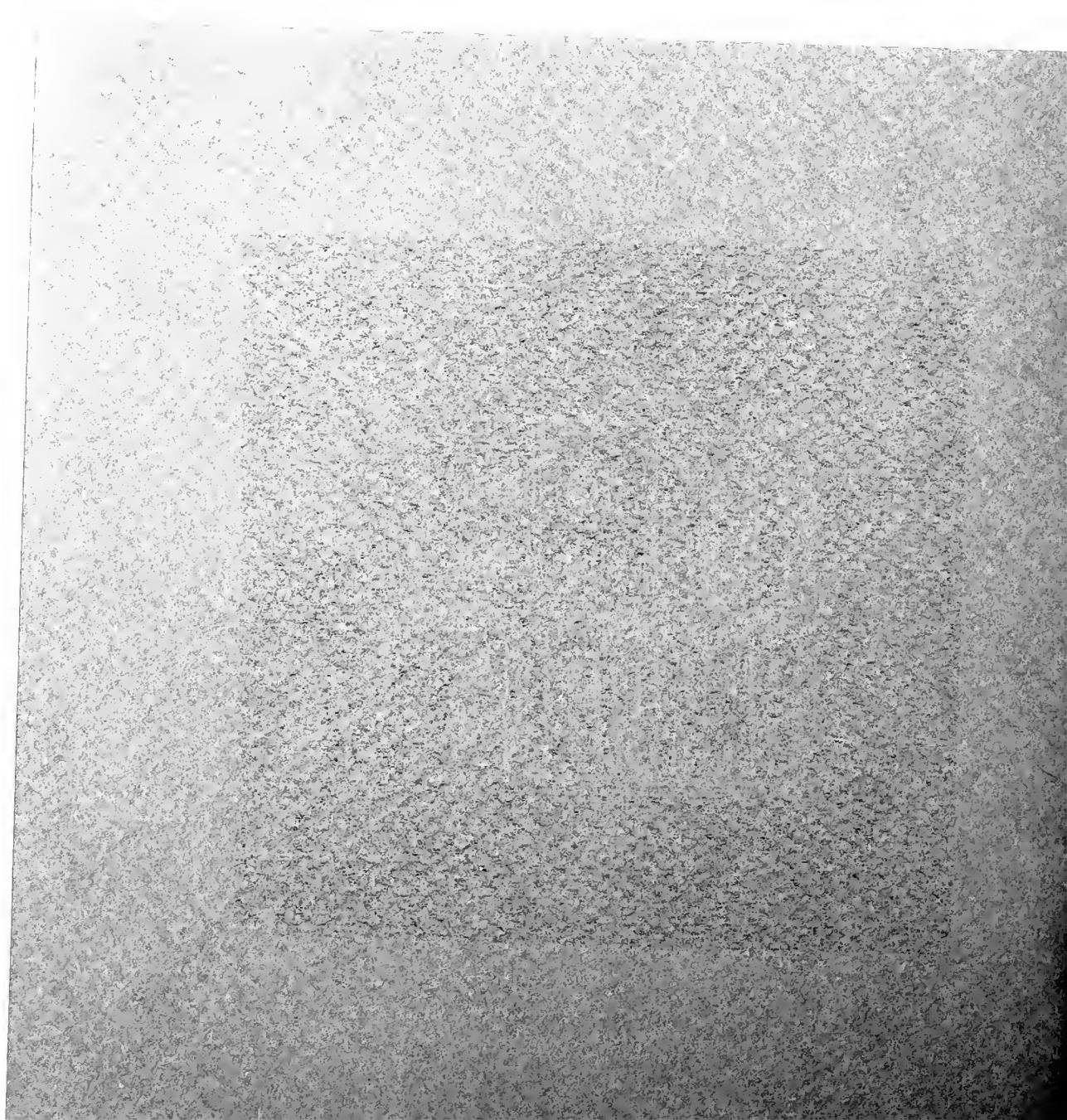


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THE BRAMBLER

SPRING 1983

PUBLISHED BY THE STUDENTS OF SWEET BRIAR COLLEGE
SWEET BRIAR, VA

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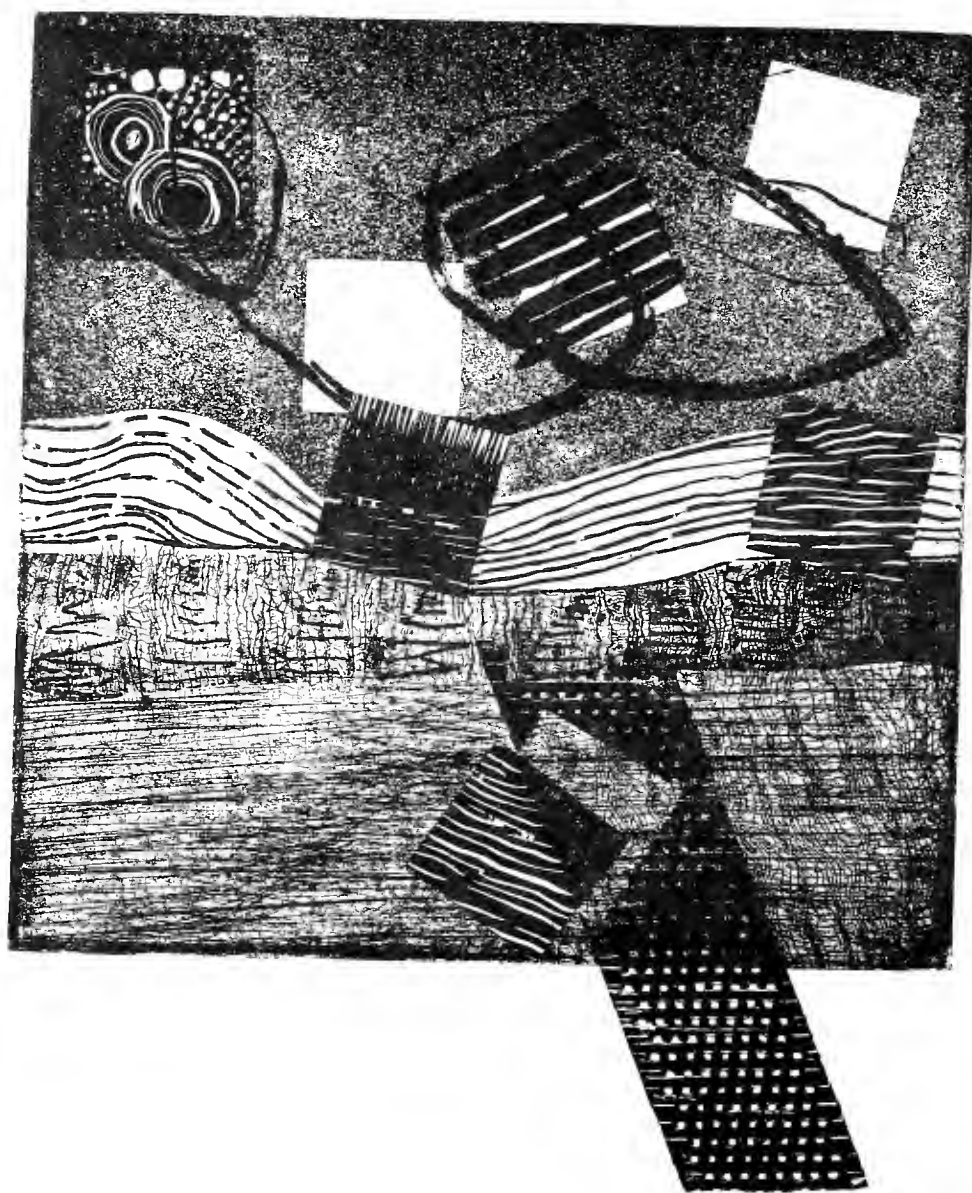
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Thank You



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Editor's Page

I don't know if I should consider writing this page an honor, a once-in-a-lifetime event, or a chore. Honestly, it's a chore, mainly because I sit here faced with a blank page and the problem of what to write. There is a lot that I'd like to say. I'd like to address the problems associated with putting out this magazine, which would basically amount to a statement on creativity at Sweet Briar. I'd like to write about the problem an artist is faced with in the 80's. I'd like to discuss the state of modern poetry. I'm not going to write about any of these topics though, this isn't the place for my intellectual ramblings. I'm going to be mundane, and discuss the philosophy that went into this year's Brambler.

We worked under certain hardships this year, specifically financial hardship. Lacking the funds to put out a slick and glossy book capable of winning beauty contests, what we decided to do was to concentrate on quality. I hope that, as you browse through, you will be impressed by the quality of the works we chose. We were very selective (in fact we only accepted about a quarter of what was submitted).

The main concern here was in making the Brambler a source of pride. It is our literary magazine, and it reflects our community as a whole. We felt it wasn't enough for students to hear of us and think, "Oh right, the Brambler." We want people to hear of us and think, "Wow, the Brambler!" We want students whose work is selected to be proud to be part of the magazine, and the community as a whole to look forward to the Brambler's arrival each spring.

So look through this issue carefully, and take it seriously. It is fortunate that we have a place for people to say so much of what is important to them, and I think we should all remember this.

Jennifer Rotman

Pusher

plastic parts
shapely snap-togethers
the naked fallout
of factory molds

in dim back rooms
Jonathan Martin dresses me
white silk
and polished patent leather
a platinum blonde
hair piled high
lips red sensuous
so sophisticated
for you

Laura Murphy

A Poem

I have the morality of a germ.

Andrea Lawrence

Ode to My Father

In my Father's eyes
Reminders of a war
He
is still fighting
Scared
Suppressed battles
Looking for an enemy
He
Can overwhelm
Crashing waves of anger
Leave him
Cold
Wet
Vulnerable
Puffy white clouds
on
his face
one small puff
on my nose
droplets of dew
on the
grass outside
the fog
creeping
so
Cautiously
Under the
Bathroom window

Post shower
Warmth
And
Steam
On the mirror
He
Had two
rifles one
shotgun and
Two pistols
Oh
How
He
Loved his guns
The
Smells
Of alcohol
And W.D. 40
The soft
Leather
Cases
Rich in
Saddle soap
I helped
Prepare
For
The
Next day's

Events
I became
An excellent marksman
Visiting
You
This summer
The daring
Silhouette
Of
The Golden Gate Bridge
Resting
Gently
On the
San Francisco Bay
Oblivious
Faces
Chapped
Lines
Taut
We
Surf-fished
For hours
Embarrassed
"sin pescados"
We
Laughed
A deep hearty laugh

Laura De Haven



Shirl Carter

No! Stop That

"Well, I see Bill is up to his usual thing. Why doesn't he let those poor squirrels alone?"

"Demps, you don't know what those squirrels do to our patio everyday!", said Aunt C., defending her husband.

"No wonder J.R. is always telling me that he's going to shoot me."

"I told J. -"

"How can ya'll tell him not to shoot when he sees his dad shooting anima-"

"Well, Demps!"

"Hey Bill! Hum a gun in your hands, out there shooting those poor squirrels," I said in a rather low voice.

"What? Poor squirrels nothing," said Bill while walking to his chair in the den.

"Bill, how many have you shot?", I said following in his tracks.

"I got one of them, then things got quiet. They're in those trees somewhere," he said while reaching for the paper.

"Look Joe and J.R., guess who came to see you all today. It's Demps! Oh, Demps Joe is just smiling."

"Hey Joe, hi J.R.," I said as J.R. came through the door first with his little, big-headed brother following behind him with a white T-shirt and a Pamper on, sucking that thumb of his.

"Just cut it out, J.R.," said Bill.

"Boo-ho, a-ah, nuff, sniff, boo," cried J.R. For some reason J.R. always cries when he wakes up. When he does, Joe just sits down beside him sucking his left thumb and lifting up his T-shirt with his left fingers, leaving his stomach bare.

"What did you do today, J.R.," I said, trying to help him stop crying.

"I we-nt to the farm and boo-hoo oooo."

"I we-nt to the farm and boo-hoo oooo." I saw Bill look sternly over his newspaper at J.R. Joe was still just sitting quietly sucking his thumb.

"Let's eat," said Aunt C. in a high pitched tone.

"When you have finished serving yourself, take you food out on the patio," she continued. "Oh, Demps, watch Joe until I get his food."

"Okay."

While Aunt C. was fixing Joe and J.R.'s plate, I had fixed a hotdog.

"Um thiz," cried Joe, pointing at my hotdog. I reached down and gave him some. He took a big bite almost getting my finger. Then Joe started making noises that I taught him, smiling at the same time. "Pop, Pop, Bubble, Bubble."

"Alright, Demps, ya'll can come on." When we got outside, Joe didn't want to walk on the patio because of all the hickory nuts. So, Joe walked very slow. When he stepped on one he picked up his foot and raised his hands for me to pick him up. Before I could reach him he saw the white bucket and started toward it but I picked him up. He didn't like that and stretched out on me.

"Thiz, Thiz, Um!" he hollered as I put him in his high chair. I then sat down at the picnic table beside J.R. who had stopped crying.

"God, we thank you for the food we are about to receive for the nourishment of our bodies. Amen," said Bill.

"Jesus wept."

"God is love."

"The lord is my shepherd I shall not want," said J.R. just before he showered everyone.

"When does Sweet Briar start?" said Bill.

"I don't know - I am not going ba-"

"Here we go again," said Aunt C, smiling. Then everything got quiet.

"Thiz," said Joe pointing to the trees. He had spotted a squirrel.

"Yeah, I see him," said Bill, looking up.

"That squirrel isn't teasing you, is he, Bill," I said laughing.

"Demps, you want anything else to eat?"

"No thanks, Aunt C. I am stuffed."

You could tell Joe was finished because he was doing all sorts of tricks in his high chair. At one pont he was sitting on the tray part.

"Aunt C., I'm going to let Joe get out of his high chair, okay."

"Please do," said Aunt C. in a pretentious voice. As soon as Joe got down he walked quickly to the white bucket, often pausing to lift his foot up to avoid a hickory

nut. As soon as he got to the bucket he said, "Thiz," and put his left hand in the bucket.

"No! Joe," said Bill yelling. Joe started shaking his head from side to side and kept playing in the bucket. When I got to him, I tried to pick him up but he just kept stretching out on me. Then I tried again, this time with more strength and got him. Soon as I let him go he went straight to that bucket. I looked in the bucket and there was a dead skinned squirrel soaking. Joe said, "Thiz," pointing to the squirrel and then put his hand in the bucket again.

"No! Stop Joe!" but he didn't so I spanked his hand and his lip turned downward. "Nan, Nan a Nannan." I said and he walked away and got a toy and threw that in the bucket.

"Alright boy!" said Bill and Joe just stood there pointing at the bucket.

"Demps, will you watch Joe while I take the food in the house?"

"Okay."

"Okay" J.R. echoed, getting his play B.B. gun.

"I'm a shoot you, Demps."

"What did I tell you about that J.R.!" Aunt C. shouted while going in the house.

"There he is," Bill said quietly while reaching for his rifle on the chair. You should've seen how fast he got a bullet from his faded jeans into his rifle. He cocked it while walking off the patio with J.R. following him. "Go back, J.R."

"J.R., come back," I said quietly.

Bang! I heard and saw the squirrel fall over the fence and then J.R.'s gun sounded.

"I got it, Gadie - I killed that squirrel!"

"Be quiet, J.R.," said Bill, looking around with a smile. Joe and I were just standing on the patio watching the action. Of course, Joe was busy sucking his thumb and pointing at the bucket. Bill got a rake and scooped up the squirrel to the top of the fence and then brought it by its tail on to the patio. He spreaded newspaper in one area and sat down and got his knife from his back pocket.

"Slide down some, J.R."

"Gadie, I can't see!"

"You will be able to see. Now slide over a little." and J.R. did. "Demps, you want to touch the squirrel," said Bill.

"Well, Yeah! Poor little squirrel," I said while touching the squirrel's tail. Joe touched the tail too with his left hand and then went back to sucking his thumb.

"You seem to be sympathetic to the squirrel," Bill said with a smile. I didn't answer but said, "Where did you shoot him at?"

"See, right behind the head."

"That's good."

"Well most of the time I shoot them straight thru the head."

"PLOP!"

"Joe, No! Stop that now!" Bill hollered while getting his knife sheath out of the bucket. "No! You know better, J.R." Bill took his knife and made an incision at the neck and tore open the skin and pulled it off the squirrel. He split open the squirrel and pulled the internal organs out.

"Thiz," said Joe while pointing to the squirrel as Bill dropped it in the water. Immediately Joe went over to the bucket and started pointing, stumping and smiling.

"No! Stop that, Joe!" we said as he put his hand in the bucket.

Gretchen Husting

Ashley Goes To College

Ashley stopped on her way to the library. She was feeling homesick. She let her heavy book bag slide to the ground and she leaned against a brick wall. She watched all of the boys pile out of their cars and drag kegs of beer on to the terrace. A tall blond boy caught her eye. He saw her staring and walked over.

"Hi there. Do I know you from somewhere?"

"I don't think so."

"That was a great game. Were you there? Hey, maybe that's where I saw you, I know I've seen you before. God, I'm sorry, a million guys probably tell you that."

"No, no - but I wasn't at the game."

"What are you doing with all those books? Been at the library? On a day like this?"

"Yea, I've got lots of work."

"Nonsense, come have a beer. You're a freshman aren't you?"

"Yes."

"I thought so, this is driving me crazy, I'm sure I've seen you before. Anyway, hold on, let me go get you a beer."

Talking to the boy made Ashley even more homesick. She missed Chili and began to think about home.

"Hi sweetheart, be a darling daughter and unzip me. My girdle is killing me. I've been shopping all day and I'm exhausted. Quick! Quick! I can't wait to show you all the goodies I brought. I went to Saks and found you two adorable kilts and a little fluffy sweater."

"Oh, Chili, you didn't have to do that."

"I know, I know. But you know how happy it makes me and you'll look beautiful in them. Oh, and Ashley, look at these! I bought you some satin bras and panties at Bonwits."

"Chili!"

"I know, I know. They're positively naughty, but I had to pass through lingerie to

get to the hair salon and I saw these horribly over dressed overweight old broads buying some and I thought it was such an injustice. The designer would have committed suicide! He designed them for young girls with tight little asses and bouncy boobs, just like yours! And Ash, you know me, I just couldn't resist!"

"Thanks Chili, come give me a hug."

"Wait! Wait! I bought you some stuffy little loafers at Gucci. After all, a girl can't go off to her first year at college without 'em."

"Oh Chili, they're beautiful."

"College shopping is such a gas, but it really is exhausting. Ashley? Sweetheart what are we going to do to relax us for tonight? Why don't we order up some champagne and sew little name tags into your kilts?"

"Why don't you take a nap?"

"Boring, boring, boring! Definitely not suitable. Raymond! Raymond! Draw two gigantic pink bubble baths. That'll be just the thing to relax us."

"What time do you have to be at the club?"

"Early tonight. My new make-up artist takes at least three hours and guess what! I almost forgot to tell you that I lost three pounds and Andora has to take in all my costumes!"

"That's great Chili."

"Bonsoir Mademoiselle Ashley."

"Bonsoir Charles."

"Vous etes tres belle se soir."

"Merci, Charles."

"That dress is to die for. Did Chili pick it up for you? I must have one! Do tell, where did she get it?"

"I'm not sure Charles, but I'll find out for you."

"Don't tell it's for me. Chili is such a little turd about keeping her best little boutiques a secret."

"I promise Charles."

"Shit, I've got to run. Emile has all us little waiters running around like chickens with our heads cut off. Oh baby, I hear you're going off to college soon. I can't believe how grown up you're getting. Ooooo la la think of all those college boys! You lucky thing. Gotta run! Hey listen, I almost forgot, can I bring you something to drink? Your usual? How about a little Perrier?"

"No thanks Charles, I'm fine."

"See ya toots."

"Good bye Charles."

Ashley leaned back in her chair to watch the first act.

"Hey, tootsey, come quick!"

"Does Chili need me in the dressing room?"

"No, no. This table full of gorgeous young hunks wants you to join them for a drink."

"No Charles, I couldn't."

"Come on sweetie, don't be shy, they won't bite. Come. Come. They're adorable, straight as an arrow I'm sure. Tant pis, but just your type. Now don't be shy, I'm sure Chili wouldn't mind just this once."

"Well O.K."

Charles walked Ashley over to the table, winked and walked away.

"Hey baby, we were all wondering what a nice little lady like you is doing at a place like this? You are a lady aren't you? Ha Ha Ha. Hey, I didn't mean to offend you. Look, I'm sorry. Come have a seat. Can I get you a drink? What are you doing here? We're on our way to school. A friend of ours told us to come check this place out if we ever came through this part of the city. Pretty wild, huh? Man am I rude. My name is Jeff. This is Mark. That's Peter over there and Blair, Rick. That's Rick in the lavender jacket, hey, isn't that the funniest looking blazer you've ever seen? Jesus, only Rick would wear something like that!"

"How do you do? It's nice to meet you. My name is Ashley Pepper."

"Well, it's nice to meet you too. Ha! this is the last place I'd expect to pick up a good lookin girl."

"Hey, Ashley, don't pay any attention at those slobs. They're great guys but they've had a little too much to drink. Remember my name? I'm Rick."

"Hi Rick."

"Did Jeff embarrass you? Let me appologize for him. He's a dick when he's smashed."

"No, no, that's O.K."

"Good, good. Listen, do you know anything about this place? I've heard a lot of crazy things about it but I've never been. It's hard as hell to get in here, the bouncer asked for about ten I.D.'s and he still wouldn't let us in. Thank God that guy Charles

came over, he's a pretty nice guy. He got us in here and then brought you over. Hey, how did you get in here? Is he a friend of yours of something? Did he get you in here?"

"No, a relative of mine owns the club."

"No kidding? Hey listen to this guys - ."

"Shut up Rick you womanizer you, that Chili thing is about to come on. Jesus, the crowd is going wild. Man, I've heard some hot things about Chili Pepper. Holy shit, there's Chili. I can't believe it! Jesus Christ!"

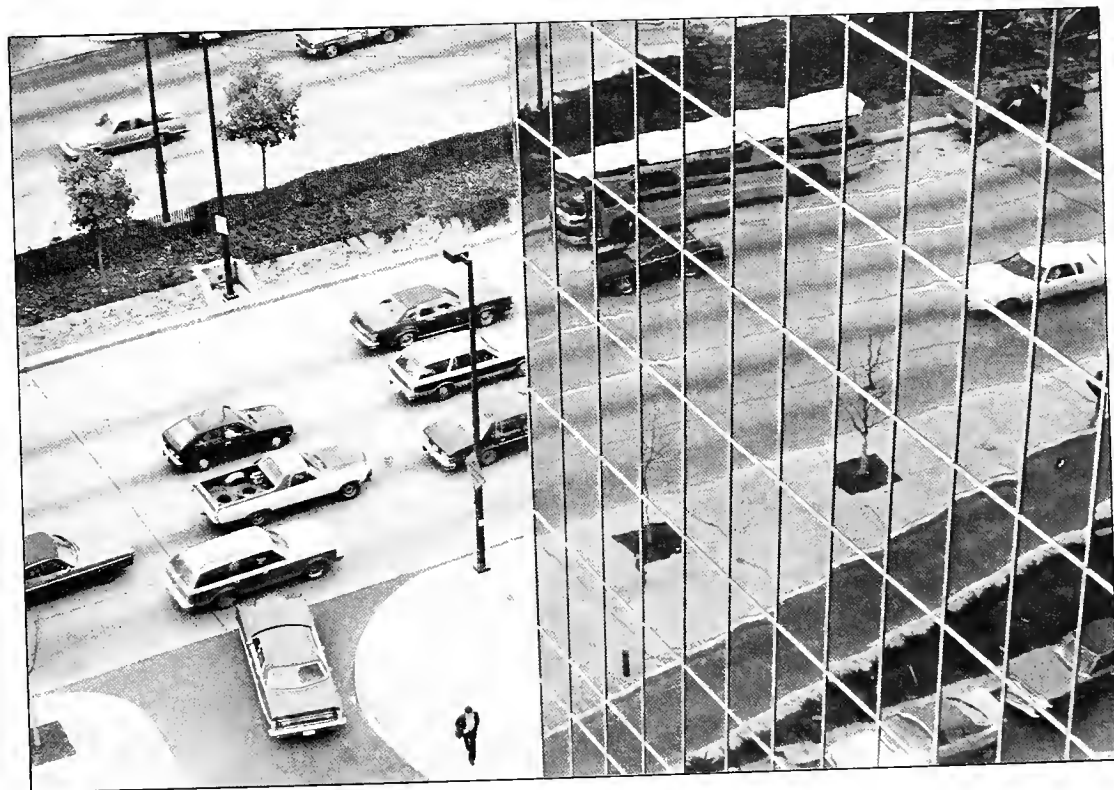
"Hey Ashley, who does own this place, he must be a wild man."

"Chili does. He's my father."

Ashley looked up into the sun. She looked over at the boys standing around the kegs laughing. She picked up her book bag and headed towards the library.

Wendy Chapin

Geographic Illusion



Mary Abrams

Water Boiles

Water boiles for
dyes
faciales
coffee
three-minute eggs
soup bones
pinto beans
pasta al dente
frozen vegetables
fresh vegetables
newborn babies
and baker's chocolate.

Water boiles to
make steam
spin a turbine
generate electricity

travel on a wire
heat a coil
to boil more water.

Water boiles to be
strained
or rained
or drained
or sweated out
evaporated
released
and slurped up again.

One less thing
I have to do
water does.

Whistling idiot.

Dress

She said the dress
was definitely
me.

If that's true,
why isn't the dress
in the kitchen
washing the dishes?

Why aren't I
hanging in the closet
or comfortably draped
at the bottom of the bed?

Trees

Tired of shopping, I take in
the trees.
How poised they look, in buckets
on the Mall.
Trees in wooden buckets line
the sidewalk:
like wearing your mother's feet
for shoes.

Worse than a great buffalo.....
- for Oscar Lewis

Worse than a great buffalo
stampede
reduced
to a shuffle.

Or a bald eagle
swooping
low down
near extinction.

We stroll
the Mall
just looking....

Find an empty bench
beside the waterfall.
Sit and gaze at
Tom McAn shoes.

There is some relief in
knowing what the future
will not bring.

Could anyone have predicted
that the Western
industrial
poor,
unable to defer gratification,
would use it all up?

Noel Stupek



Michelle McSwain

" 5 January 1982 "

Gravity looses its pull
and the mindseye is filtered
by a dot on a tiny page.

Air bustles about you
like people in a New York subway
but nature is transcended.

Steam on a window
becomes a little man
then suddenly explodes into a Hiroshima cloud.

A Trip Home

The sunlight
across morning
spots the blue jay's flight.

A ripple
beneath
the old sun's light.

*A Childhood Memory
for my mother*

Her house shoes shuffle
across the mahogany floors
and sound like a carpenters
sandpaper against soft wood.

Through the doorway her body
silhouettes the early morning sun
that peeks through slits
in the venetian blinds.

"Good Morning"
"good mornin'"

She brushes the child's stringy, blond
hair away from her eyes
and the blue saucers blink
and focus on the wrinkles of age.

The day begins
for a mother and her daughter.

E. Hope Warner

Quiet Masterpiece

A buddah sits
half-smiling in my living room.
Through painted eyes
and teeth
he gives me three wishes.

Actually,
there is no buddah
in my living room.
I was sitting in a car
thinking of buddahs,
and the absurdity
of owning a painted buddah,
and the buddah sitting
half-smiling in a living room.
I wish the wishes.

To own a Victorian house
in the country,
with sunlit porches
white wood and black shutters,
leaving for the city weekends
to bring fresh strawberries
for my family.

To sleep in silky
linen softness.
yellow curtains waving

as a breeze brings
fresh-mowed lawn smells
through my Victorian
windowpanes.

To live my life
without thinking twice,
without trying to find
similarities
on the pages
of quiet masterpieces
I buy hopefully
in stores.

In the car
the sun sets on my left.
We are travelling
northeast
on a back road in New Jersey.

A painted buddah tells me
life is like the sun --
the sudden rise,
the pain of descent.

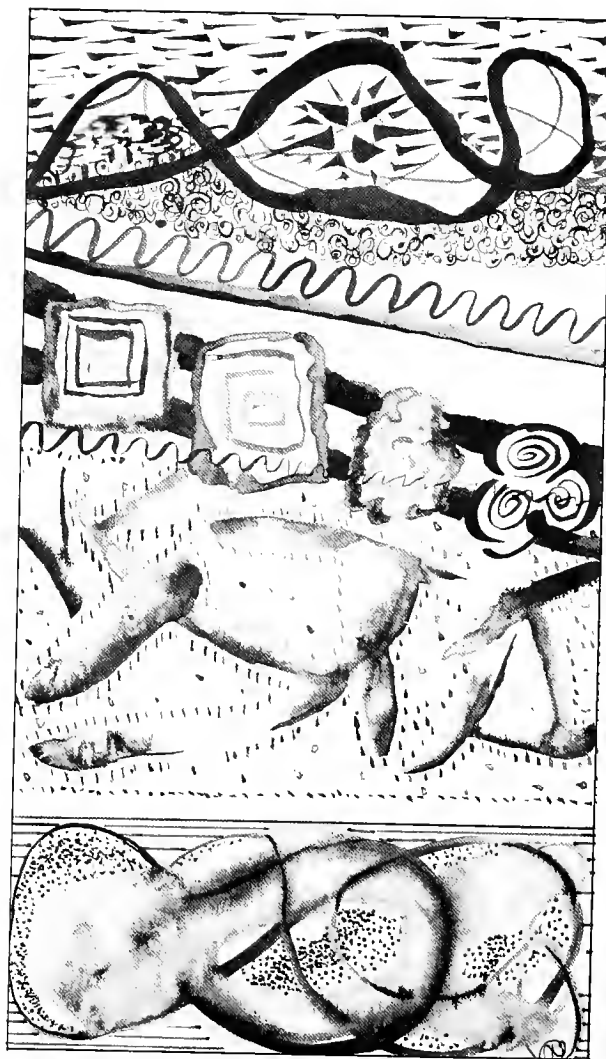
The road rises and falls
beyond windows
on every side of me.

Prayer

It's the time of year
when evenings turn cool again.
I bought the children shoes
up at the K-Mart, Lord,
for \$8.95 a pair,
but my wife says potatoes
are up near a quarter a pound.
You know it's not easy
working like this all day,
and the roof still needs fixing.
Let me take on the winter
like the Rock of Gibraltar,
like my car shocks pinned
in just right and steady.
This is the only life I know.

Noel Stupek

Illustration: Seahorse



Seahorse

Tonight I wanted
to write something beautiful
with images like dew
dropping from cherry trees
in an ocean of spring
sunshine white and pink,
but you can't trust an image.
Aunt Jen showed me
how a cucumber yellows
into pickle
in one of my images,
but it was soon forgotten
when Anna showed me
the brand on her arm
from one holocaust or another,
like cattle she was
in an unpretty image.
Tonight I wanted
to write something beautiful,
to be a seahorse lapping
the silent sands of dreams.

sonnet

and then the detection of metals --
the tinted glasses etched in chrome,
the steel-shined propoganda of your arrivals
departures

Noel Stupek



Laura Murphy

Whose Brown Crop

oranges are hard in the sand,
damaged trees droop
left nest on winter cactus.
bobcat combs the desert scrub
and crosses cold tracks.
trails become iron rails,
chinese railroads
rickshaw across the barren plain.

Joy Reynolds

The Word Game

I had only perked my ear to the word because of the word game in Miss Skivens' class. At the time I was quite unable to even spell it. The goal of the word game was to compose "the longest and most diverse" list of words heard outside St. Stephan's walls which were new to us. At the end of one week we were to bring our lists to Miss Skivens and as a group compose one joint list complete with meanings. The student who compiled the most outstanding list won a trip to Palamine's for ice cream, with Miss Skivens of course. Having only acquired six words to my list in the length of two days, I was quite excited upon hearing the word. It was strange to me -- it struck me as being a word of great weight and consequence. Miss Skivens was sure to take heed. I heard the word while in our hay loft, secluded from view by tumbles and mounds of yellow hay. I had been following Lockley, our cat who had recently moved moved her new-born to a spot that was yet unknown to me. Since arriving home from school, I had sat, chin-in-hands, waiting for Lockley to appear and unknowingly lead me to her litter.

It was a day in early spring; all around one could hear birds fluttering about and grasshoppers buzzing from blade to blade in the nearby pasture. Clouds were few and I remember thinking they reminded me of ones I had seen once in a nursery rhyme book. They were puffed like cotton balls, fake looking. Weeds had begun to push through the cracks of the old, musty-smelling bricks of the front walk making them look as if they were growing a beard. I had on tennis shoes. On the rubber tip there was a darkened grass stain from the summer before. Streaked across it was a brighter, almost fluorescent new one. I had always preferred dirty tennis shoes to ones, much to the displeasure of Mama Fran. I could usually predict wash day and manage to hide them from her lye soap and scrub brush.

I heard the screen door behind me whine and I turned to my sister Tess, her pink shorts the only thing visible for a few moments in the cool blackness of the house's interior. She let the door slap to its framing and paused to put her hands on her hips.

Around her head was a wound-up blue scarf tied at one side. She cocked her head to her shoulder, squinting her eyes down upon me.

"Have YOU seen my crochet needle," she demanded. I twisted my head around to resemble hers and contorted one side of my face.

"Crochet needle? What would I be doing having YOUR crochet needle?"

She turned on the ball of her sneaker, haughtily releasing a sigh. It was one of her temper-tantrum sighs. She went back into the cool darkness and again let the door flap.

"I didn't even know you had one anyway," I hollered as her pink shorts disappeared.

She would be going riding soon -- it was Wednesday. On Wednesday afternoons and Friday nights Tess entertained her beau Paul-Michael. Paul-Michael was three years older than she and had moved down from Maryland the year before. Maybe this was why my sister was so taken with him. She had been seeing him ever since he had moved. He was slender with taut muscles and a stoic-looking nose. He had dark hair, unlike Tess' first beau, and big, arresting blue eyes. His father was a doctor in town and I think he wanted to be one too.

He was well liked by my other brothers and sisters and even though I had heard Momma call him "one of those Catholics" I had always liked him. He never paid much attention to the rest of us, but he was always polite, in his northern stutter.

My sister had at least twelve pictures of him in and around her room. She even had them in her closet. I angered her once for inquiring about a sheet of paper she had that he had doodled on in our kitchen while waiting for her to come down one Friday night. She had claimed, with one of her irritated sighs, that it bore a valuable phone number and was not to be thrown away at any cost.

As these thoughts occupied me in my wait, Paul-Michael arrived as he did each Wednesday afternoon. I must have appeared quite bored to him for instead of ruffing my hair or winking with a click of his mouth, he sat down by me and asked what I was up to. He smelled of what was probably some sort of anesthetic and had a cottonball secured with adhesive taped on his left hand. I could feel the warmth of the porch floor under my thighs and remember detecting the slightest stream of sweat trickling down his temple. It was a perfect day for them to ride. I told him of my plan to follow Lockley and discover her kittens. He remained silent for a moment, letting a forefinger tread across the top step. When green pollen accumulated, he stared at it a

moment then blew it off in the direction of the sun. He turned his head and looked down at me. I thought maybe he had ignored me, but he wrinkled his lips and said:

"Now now, don't you think that poor momma cat has enough problems without you playing spy?"

I stared at him, just short of becoming confused, and he went back to tracing his finger along the pollinated step.

"Lockley likes her kittens -- she's not poor," I said. I thought of the last time I had seen Lockley's litter. There were eight, black-fuzzed, their eyes closed tight.

"Maybe so," he answered resting his elbows on his knees. "But she's maybe a little sad because of all her new responsibilities and wants to be left alone. That's why she probably moved them from you."

"Un-un, she needs me to help her take care of them. There's eight you know."

He looked at me for a moment, his eyebrows knit. He then sighed, as if defeated, and stood up. Turning to go into the house he wished me luck in my search. He went in our house, shutting the screen door with a click. I heard Mama Fran telling him to go on back to the side porch where he would find Miss Tess, when suddenly Lockley skimmed around a nearby corner. I remained as still as my triumph would allow and was successful in being unnoticed.

Lockley led me around to the back of our house and eventually through the back pasture to the barn. Her belly was heavy with milk, pulled down in eight pink spots. It swayed and jostled as she led me on her way and seemed at the time to pain her. She slipped through a crack in the door and was gone from my view. By the time I opened the door and stepped into the barn, she had disappeared. It was dark inside, the air warmer, almost stifling. I stood in the sunlight of the open barn door for sometime to try to detect a tiny mew or whimper. When none came I decided to climb into the loft to get an all-over view for when she did emerge.

I snuggled down into a secluded spot, close enough to the edge that I could watch for Lockley. The heat was mesmerizing, enveloped the whole of the barn. There were no noises -- only a muffled version of what really existed outside the barn's green planks. My eyelids felt weighted. I thought of Miss Skivens and our word game, and of Tess and the blue scarf about her head. Then I saw her pink shorts disappear through the house again and heard her asking Paul-Michael if he had her crochet needle.

When I awoke, the sunlight from the open barn door had diminished somewhat. It

took me a minute to fully awake and remind myself exactly where I was. It seemed as if voices were coming from down a long tunnel somewhere. Then I remembered Lockley and sat up. But looking over the edge of the loft I saw only my sister and Paul-Michael and heard their voices.

"Tess, it's really very simple. You won't even feel a thing - think of the relief."

Tess sat on a stray bale of hay plucking the left leg of her jodphers with her forefinger and thumb. Paul-Michael stood above her dangling a crop to and fro in the light of the barn door. The sunlight in his dark hair picked up traces of red tints and threw them back on Tess' lowered head.

"Relieved?! You're crazy -- you don't even care -- how do you think you can understand? I've heard about them -- it sounds awful, like a vacuum cleaner and they do so hurt. I can't." She kicked a tuft of loose hay.

He filled his chest with the warm barn air and looked up above him before answering her. "Well, it can't hurt as bad as you've obviously been told that it does or so many people wouldn't get them." His voice was flat, like he was reading his words. "Tess," he continued, "it can't be any other way."

Tess turned to one side and he went on. "How did this happen anyway? You lied to me, Tess. You were always so sure ... weren't you, Tess dear?" He began to pace back and forth, tapping the crop against his leathered shin. I did not understand their conversation: it was just another of their arguments to me, but I sensed a sort of seriousness and knew it was too late to make my presence known.

Paul-Michael continued to pace and tap, pace and tap. I could see the field grasses outside the barn door begin to sway with the direction of the breeze. He stopped a moment as if in retrospect and murmured, "Yes, always so sure," and continued his routine.

Tess straightened suddenly, her arms bearing her weight behind her. "Stop -- just stop. It's not all my fault and you know it -- you KNOW it," she sank back down and gazed out the open door. "I know it's really the best thing," she continued, "considering everything. But it's just the THOUGHT of it -- and that awful sound. Think of it, Paul -- think of what it is."

Paul-Michael stopped his pacing suddenly, cracking his crop one last piercing time, his back to my sister. "Look, just don't think in those terms and you'll be fine." He paused for a moment. "I can't have you on me for the rest of my life," he continued, "You have to get an abortion."

"But why can't --" Tess blurted suddenly, starting to stand up. Paul-Michael met her half-way, placing his crop on the top of her head and lowering her back down.

"No," he said.

I became lost in the intonations of my new word and no longer paid any attention to me sister and Paul-Michael. My expectations for the word were far more enticing than their argument. They left shortly afterwards, as I sat trying to derive the word's spelling in the air with a forefinger. It seemed like a long word to me -- longer than the other words on my list. It was harsh sounding too - - it made me think of the boar out in the pen, ugly and imposing.

I remained in the loft long afterwards, occasionally remembering to look over the edge for signs of Lockley. I sat wondering, probing my mind, trying to determine if I had ever heard the word before in my life. I did not think I had.

Dusk had begun to lower outside the barn. The still-open barn door revealed only a slender triangle of sunlight. When I treaded back to our house, the grass in the pasture wet my feet with its slight film of dew. I never located Lockley's kittens in the length of that day but I had been satisfied with the acquisition of my new word - a word Miss Skivens was sure to take heed of. On the thought of writing down the new word on my list before Mama Fran gathered us for our dinners, I ran back to our front porch where Lockley sat looking on, waiting to be let in.

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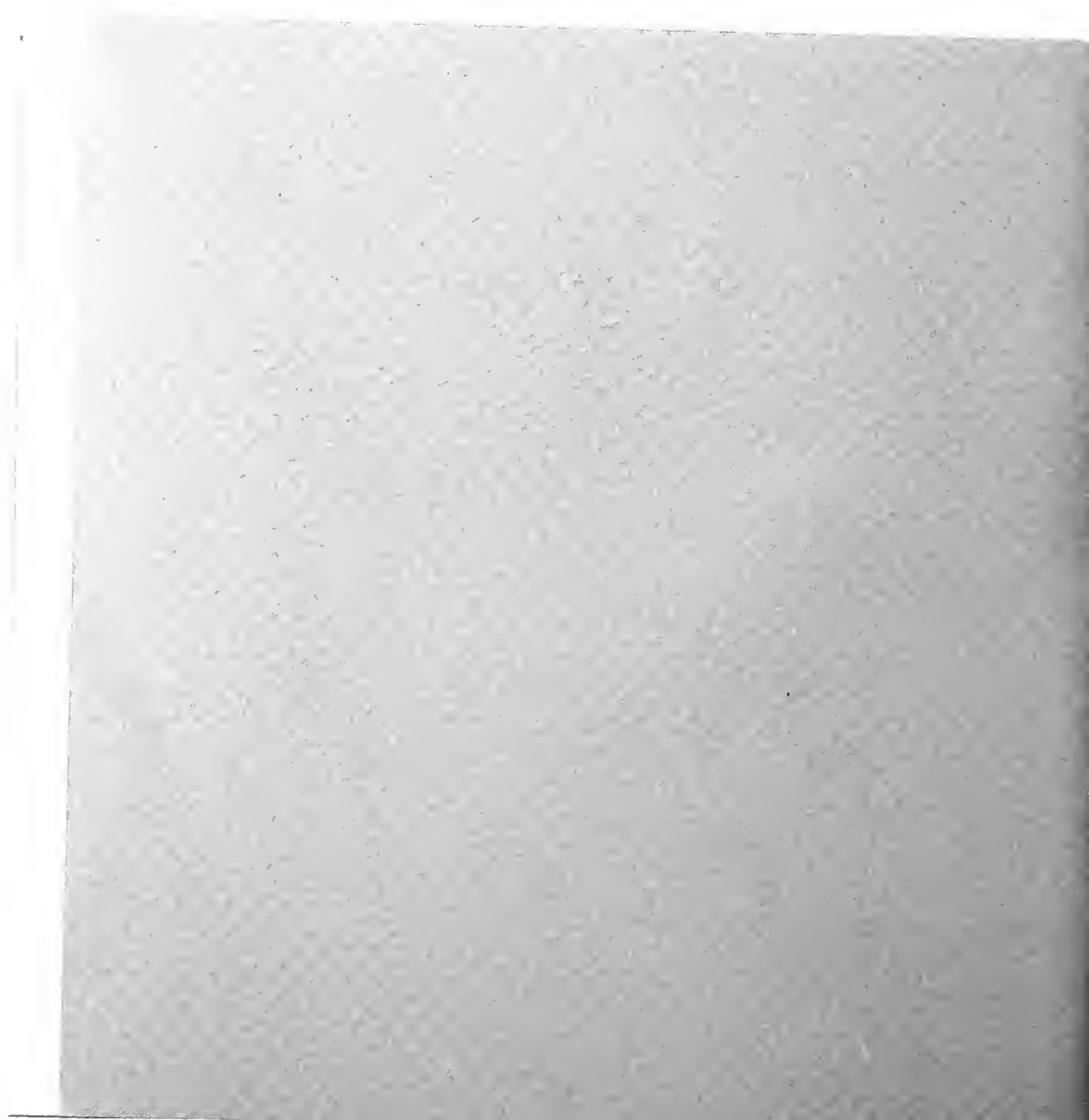
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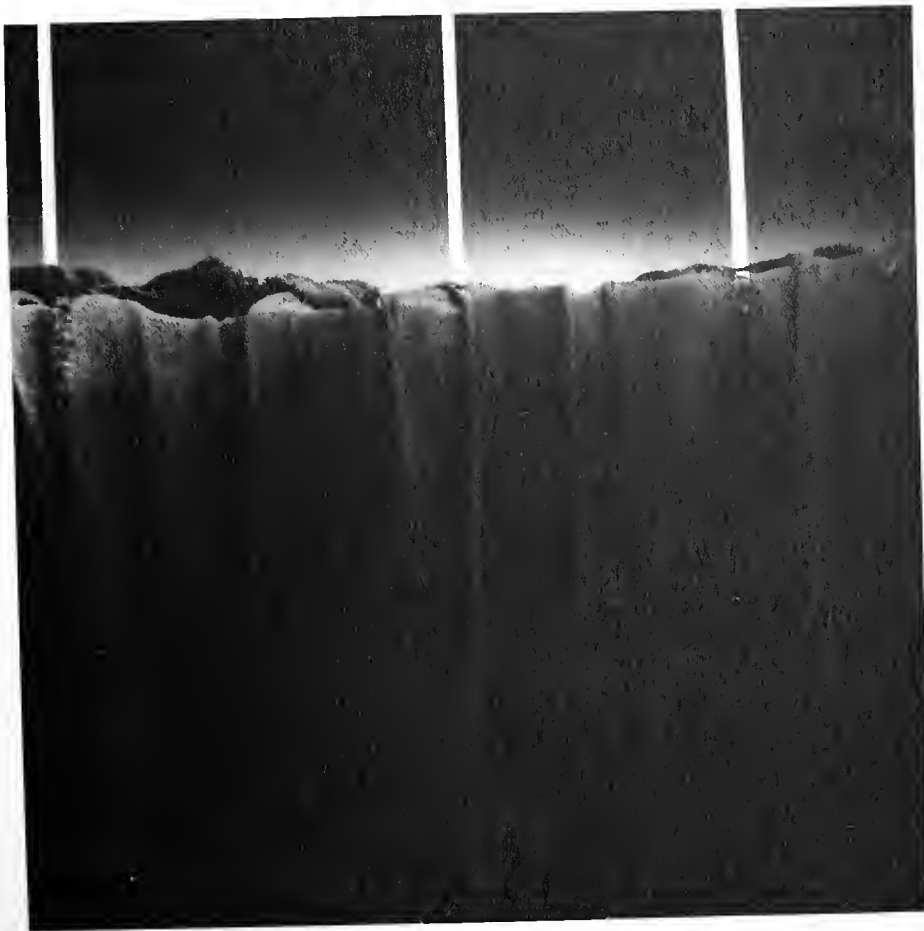
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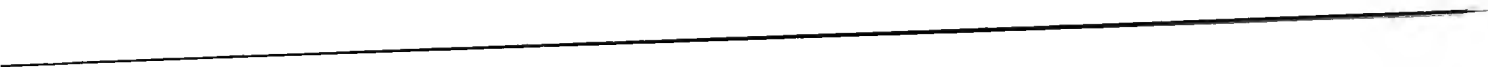
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The Brambles Fall 1983



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THE BRAMBLER

FALL 1983

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SWEET BRIAR, VA 1983



This edition of **The Brambler** initiates a bend in the direction of future Bramblers.

The setting of the type and the arrangement of the work on each page of this Brambler has been done by the Brambler staff. These tasks, in the past, were done by the printer.

This particular edition is designed by the editor. It incorporates traditional book design, present book design concepts, and personal design ideas.

The Brambler continues to be published for the students of Sweet Briar College.

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Contained

JENNIFER ROTMAN

[1

The baby cries in the next room.
I pull open the window
Fresh oil-puddles span the street
Signal lights change for no one
While two little black kids
Yank at a kitten
Which cries.

And then on the window sill
My dumb fingers find
Something new.

A green mantis
Rising like some drunken boxer
So pretty in a small glass jar.

Beating Around: A Sestina

JENNIFER ROTMAN

Red
Leaves
Like
Dried mitten-hands
Chatter along the street.
It is cold,

2] So cold
Husks of crushed red
And white beer cans wobble noisily in the street's
Gutters; people jingle keys and loose change, blow noses, wait to leave.
I sit on a bus-stop bench, hands
Trembling, and think of someplace I could like.

I think, too, I like
The cold-
ness, my hand
Burrowing in my pocket, red
And chapped; I do want to leave.
Sick of being here on this street

Watching one row of houses huddled near the street's
Hard edge, lined one so close to another like
Targets in a shooting gallery; tiny cubicles of yard decorated with stiff leaves,
Only seeing cold
Whites and reds
Like packs of cigarettes racked by some clerk's hands.

JENNIFER ROTMAN

[3

Deep in my pocket, my hand
Cups the ball of change, some plucked from street
Corners. My fingers re-sculpt the shapes of pennies and a red
Button off my shirt cuff: a treasure, like
Some poor pirate's cache buried on a cold,
Windy island, the only thing to keep me from leaving

Having so little with which to leave.
A woman shoves some paper about God into my hand
But I only concentrate on the cold
And sleep. The paper crumples easily and rolls along the street
Past some old man who looks like
He's just gotten high, leaning against the stark red

Brick. I walk up the street
My hands cold like
The twisted leaves, stuffed down in my pockets, chapped and red.

Limbs

JENNIFER ROTMAN

I clasp my hands
Tighten and
Constrict my fingers
Into one hard
Instrument

And close my eyes
As equally tight
Clench my teeth
My jaw
My skull
My mind

4]

Into the midst
Of this anger
Which comes and goes;
A gust
Of wind,
A spiral of dead leaves
Shooting outward
Like blood into a dormant limb

And the spiralling
Dots I see;
The very essence
Of my vision
Clenched
Fisted
Into each tight socket.

Ruffles Have Ridges

JENNIFER ROTMAN

Shannon,
You will get used to the
Tattered edges of
The shade
On the window
In the bathroom
And enjoy
Its slight scratching
Across the chipped white
Sill

And the screen that
Grids the view
Of blue mountains which fade
Like a flat mirage.

You will wonder if
They are real
There,
Reaching your hand
Out
Towards

And meeting
A black
Coarse screen,
The sharp edges
Of shade
Capable of cutting
Flesh
If you
Touch.

Solo
for D.C.S.

JENNIFER ROTMAN

I touch my hand
In this fleshless
Wilderness:
Skin,
Muscle and bone,
Cuts, bruises not
Mine,
Aware that the round moon
Reflects the whites
Of my eyes
Like it does every
Animal,

Deep shadows wrapping
Themselves
Around tree trunks,
I perspire
Gripping my pocketknife
Voice repeating
A name.

Again and again
I twist the silver blade
In and out of a writhing shadow.

Leaves brush
Together overhead
Not acknowledging me.
I pull up a leg
Of my jeans
Exposing a tight
Thigh, put knife
To flesh and
Carve
My initial
There,
Feeling blood
Trickle out
Of
"D".

JENNIFER ROTMAN

[7

Ed Streeto
wants
your

body
by
Gloria Stevens.

NOEL STUPEK

8]



Dew scope

NOEL STUPEK

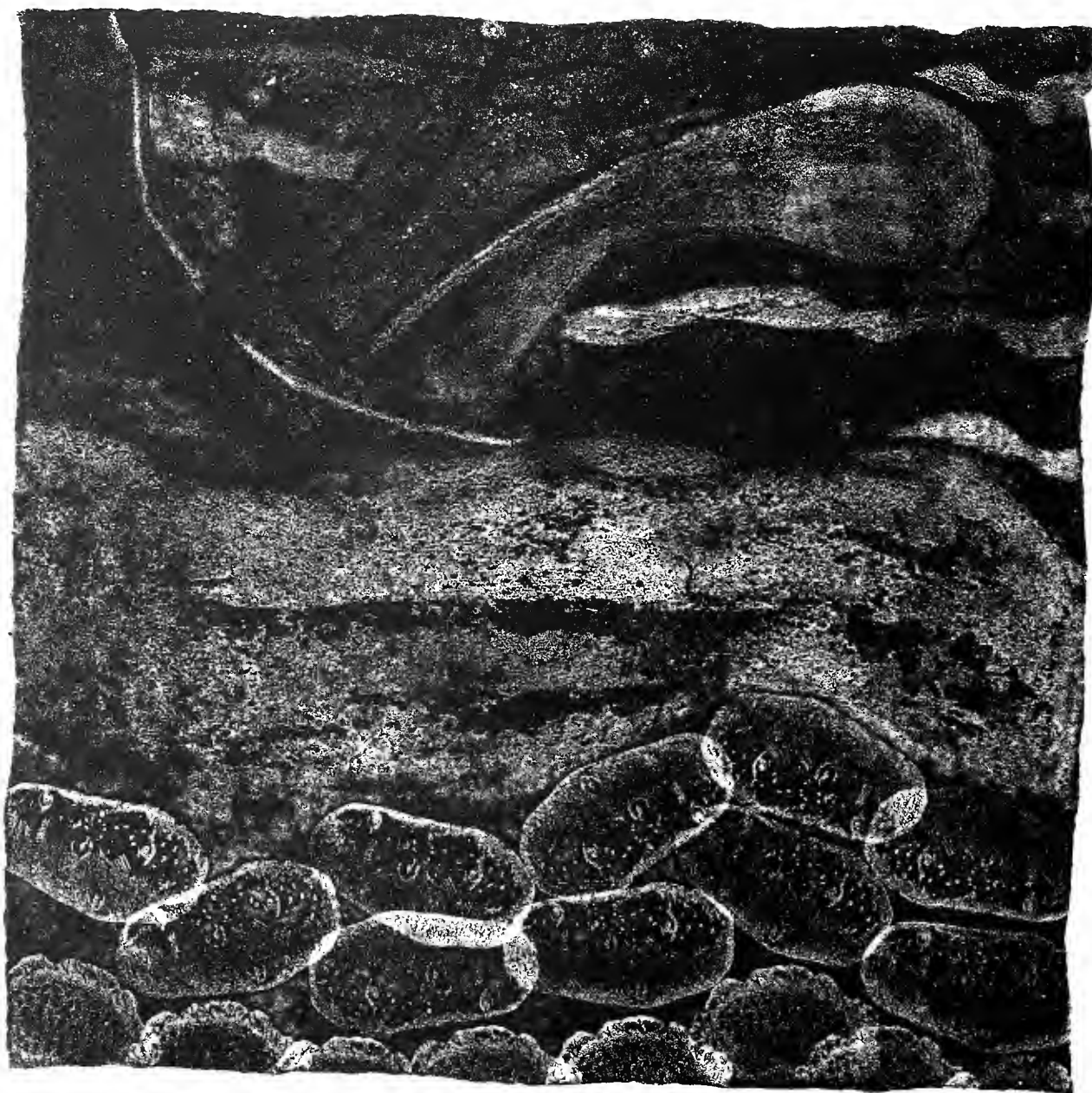


[9]

Fairly gravific

NOEL STUPEK

10]



Centralia again

NOEL STUPEK



[11



GIBSON MURPHY

12]

Definition of a wink: An optical flirtation that implies gesturely without commitment.

Bella

AMY SIMMONS



[13

14]

Racial prejudice is an unrelenting nemesis to those who experience it. The odd thing about racial prejudice is that it touches the lives of all of us, but affects some more than others. Is not everybody an integral part of the systems that go to create racial prejudice? You may not be actively involved in it, but you are either x or y. You may ignore racial prejudice or you may practice it, but you cannot not be a part of it. Race, they tell us, has no objective reality. Of course not. Like love or hate it merely has physical expressions.

The following are excerpts from a series of writings that reached me in the summer of 1983. I was away, being busily intellectual, so the physical reality of communal conflict touched me in hard words. Let me begin at the end and work backwards. From my brother, Christopher, dated 6th September, 1983:

Dear Mallihai, Nice to hear that you are safely over the Atlantic and haven't been shot down by the Soviets. Things are quite peaceful here at the moment, the weather is foul, a somewhat belated monsoon, which is keeping everyone indoors and so not in the mood for burning everything. Studying for the exams is going on, not in the same spirit as before I'm afraid, but it's got to be done. The entire study machinery was ticking over very nicely until the riots put a spanner in the works, so I have had to start all over again. Very frustrating... Anyway, according to the new timetable... I should be finished by the 5th of October if nothing more goes wrong.

Apparently quite a lot had been going wrong. From a newspaper cutting stamped "Subjected to Censorship", on August 7th, 1983:

It is this time of the year that has witnessed the ugly communal riots of recent years. In mid-1977 soon after the General Election communal violence spread throughout the country and the Commission of Inquiry into these incidents had hardly completed their findings when in mid-1981 it flared again. This year, in mid-1983... the worst and most intricate of riots gripped the nation, The Government and the people. As we emerge from the rubble of riot torn cities we now see before us refugee camps of displaced persons...

MALLIHAI LAWRENCE

A further elucidation comes from a letter dated 9th September, 1983, from my mother, writing in an objective frame of mind.

...Now we come to the long term view of the situation here. It would seem that the country is on the brink of a social revolutionary era where, so far, racism has been the first weapon to be used. Revolutionary forces from the north and south have attempted to overthrow the government and upset the pattern of democracy. On the other hand they have let loose the violence of class-warfare by directing ethnic antagonism against the objects of "foreign wealth". Quite apart from the struggle of x liberation, whatever that means, we admit that x owned wealth has been plundered. This elimination of the x element was the easiest and there is still more to go. Now the mobs have learned that looting is easy, there arises the spectre of a general leveling to the level of the mob, regardless of race...

Obviously racism is a tool of social revolution, yet revolution needs no help from racial prejudice once it gets going. And there is little comfort in knowing that in spite of race, class differences once more emerge triumphant as the true basis for social revolution.

In the thick of "the troubles" a short letter dated 10th August, 1983, stated the following:

We are now dating our activities as ante-bellum and inter-bellum. Such is the feeling now, that post-bellum is yet to come.

I will spare you the gory details and present you with yet more excerpts from letters. These prove to me that one can be intimately involved in racial prejudice because by birth one is an x or y, and yet not be excessively bitter. Racism is a tool, and not merely an end for vindictive energy.

31st July, 1983

Dear Mallihai, The International Telephone lines are closed so I'm writing the epic of recent events. Rest assured that we are well and fed on rib-stickers, Pluto included. Chris and I persist in discussing all this in the light of Greek and Roman history -- we are not a patch on Alcibiades or Sulla, but Father is not appreciative of our learning... At least I can keep the home front running calmly. It is most strenuous but I feel that seeing familiar order and organization has a salutary effect on all concerned. It promises security like a child's bed-time ritual. I have a saucepan of made up tea to dish out to police, security, servant, etc., as there is not a boutique standing hereabouts. Similarly there is cooked rice and strangely mixed vegetables curry and isthme. Chris is an excellent scrounger and his knowledge of basic camp cooking is invaluable. Yesterday we got a deluge of pep talks on T.V. from Minsters and top clergy... Plans for the future will wait till calmer times.

At the end of a letter dated 30th July, 1983, my mother in a valiant attempt to cheer herself up after three strenuous days taking refuge with friendly neighbours describes her day's activity. It proved to me that many are involved in the conflict of x and y, but it takes a fanatic to make racism his life's concern.

1 p.m. Back again this morning and I haven't stopped going since. Now lunch is cooked for 6, we have a loaf of soda bread that looks as though it should be in a painting of the Last Supper, Nihal is playing bridge with the young couple from Mrs. L's, Chris is making reins for Yasmin's toy horse, a watcher has been delivered by the Security Service who have curfew passes (so we stay at home tonight I hope), Pluto has been fed (food enough in the freezer for another 10 days at least) and I shall soon serve up whatever the Pauper's Cook Book or Frugal Cooking never dreamed of.

There is a funny side to all of this like climbing Shalini's gate in a skirt and looking dignified as well as hasty, like staying mum in Mrs L's prayer room while a looter from over the road insisted on making a phone call in the passage outside (shades of Priest Holes and Roundheads), like threatening to cook the grubs in the aubergines Chris garnered from the Kirillapone street market (protein in another form.) Chris and all his friends have been sent out by their respective Mums to get anything cookable. I fear his A' levels, due to start on the 8th, will be postponed and so will Knuckles' trekking,... The essence of life is Adapatation. I will send this through the office hoping that an official envelope will get through. 31st. All calm in this area as the hill country goes up in flames. We have acquired a loaf of bread and 12 eggs. Three Moscow oriented parties are proscribed. Love, Mum.

There is seldom a specific beginning or end to racial prejudice, and neither x nor y can be labeled the goodies or baddies. Through newspapers, letters, conversations, reflections and prayers, I too, though far away, am intimately involved. If one is on the receiving end, however objective one may be, there is no escaping the sense of terror, the tears, the humiliation, the regret and hopelessness. Racism does not allow itself to be explained or reasoned away. As a moderate x, I honestly feel no antipathy for the y's because neither fanatic x nor fanatic y can help what they do. However, as a moderate x I am caught in the middle, and unfortunately, it's people like me who get squashed. I would be a fanatical x if I refused to be squashed. Said Shakespeare, "our fault...lies not in our stars, / But in ourselves, that we are underlings". Being merely an "underling", I can only regret that I have no option but to be an x. *Quod erat demonstrandum.*

Ten come 10leave 9today nine now

NOEL STUPEK

[17

suddenly
sudden truths
from the past

come

thoughts
not satisfied with
concerns of

today

they
will not
lazily linger but

leave

not
concerned to be
satisfied only

now

“*new math*”

KAREN GONYA

18]

We talked
about religion

and had some division

of opinion
that is.

ELIZABETH WASSELL



[19

ELIZABETH WASSELL

20]



Two Poets

KAREN BIEMILLER

[21

She sat there red curls upon her head,
And mimicked things that were said.
A smile on her face,
Or rather a grin was the case.

She listened with such thought,
The reader had her attention caught.
Her head twitched, her eyes blinked--I don't think she knew,
What had given me the clue.

She liked the poem, I could tell,
But deep down she knew, it wouldn't sell.
It was envy--bright green
To me it was obviously seen.

A Peaceful Moment

DOOTSIE EVINS

22]

Clover and flowered field,
like a blanket covering the recent
winter ground,
Cushions our feet from the over-
grown land.
Pockets are full of clams that once
lived in the creek running along
the outskirts of the field.
Tiny yellow and white flowers are
grasped in one hand,
While you hold the other.
Silence is broken by the trotting
of horses,
As we walk back toward the house.

Cathedral

LESLIE McRAE

[23

The cathedral stands tall.
The giant ornate belfry
Overlooks the park.
The ancient stained glass windows
Glare down imposingly
Like stern fathers,
Frowning fiercely at the goings-on.
The pigeons nest in the upper rafters.
Their cooing, making music
For all the passers-by.

WHITNEY BALL

24]



WHITNEY BALL



[25

26]

back when i was young
just yesterday
when i was a child
i knew i would grow up
tomorrow
so i went to k-mart
on my last day as a child
and bought my toys
to take to the grave
for the death of me as a child
toys that only a child could use
but that was yesterday
and it is now tomorrow
and i should be grown up,
but i am still playing
with the toys i bought yesterday
when i was a child
the toys that only a child could use.

"Nate, quit it," I said, brushing my nephew away from my legs. "Come on, let's watch this show."

"Nah, I don't like it. That lady's ugly." He found a small truck beside the hearth and began running it over the bricks in front of the fireplace.

"Nate, that's Julia Child you're talking about. She's my hero." I stretched my feet out onto the coffee table and smiled at him.

"Oh, Robin," he said.

"It's true, Bucko."

"Don't call me Bucko."

"Okay, I won't if you let me watch this show." Julia was getting to a complicated part of her souffle which required my close attention.

"Robin, can we go fishing today? I know where we can find worms, big, fat ones."

"I don't know, Babe," I leaned forward and glanced out the window at the only partly cloudy sky. "I think it's going to rain," I sat back against the couch.

"Oh come oooooooooon, please, please, please." He stood up and sat on the couch next to me, my good friend Nate.

"If you let me kiss you."

"Oh," he said, rolling his eyes, "forget it." He reached over and pinched my bare leg.

"I told you to quit that pinching, Buddy, or I will kiss you." I said in a half-serious voice. "Besides it causes cancer."

"What?"

"Nothing."

"Robin, when are you going back to college? You've been home a long time."

"What are you trying to do, get rid of me?" I shook my head at him. "I am in college, Baby, I'm just living at home for awhile. I needed to come home to spend some time, sleep in my own bed, and go fishing with you and stuff like that."

"Oh," he paused and turned the wheels on the Tonka in his hand slowly around and around. "Then you will take me fishing today?"

"Yeah," I said as I rested my hand on his silky blonde head.

"Bon Appetit!" cried Julia breathlessly from the television. I turned my head toward the screen.

"Aw, Nate, I missed how she finished the souffle." The mention of food seemed to always inspire him.

"Robin, can I have some cereal?"

"Nate, you eat continually over here, doesn't your mother ever feed you?" I asked as we walked down the hall to the kitchen.

"No," he answered.

"What'll you have, we've got Wheat Chex, Raisin Bran, Froot Loops, or granola." I said at the doorway of the pantry.

"Got any Life?" he asked from behind me.

"Nope."

"I'll take Froot Loops then."

"How about granola instead?" I suggested.

"No way! Rob, will you lift me onto the counter?"

"You're too big for me these days, Bucko." He glared at me and rolled his eyes. "There's a chair, climb up yourself," I said, opening the refrigerator.

"Hey, here's my Dad," he shouted, standing up on the counter. I looked out the kitchen window to see my older brother helping his two-year old out of his aging VW stationwagon. "He's got Grace with him."

"Here's your cereal, Nate."

"Wait a minute," he said, jumping off the counter and running toward the back door. "Hi Dad!"

"Hi Nate. Got a kiss for me?"

"Yeah," he said quietly and kissed his father's golden beard. Jeff sat Grace on the floor of the kitchen and looked up at me.

"Hello, Mom and Dad around?"
"I don't know. Mom's at the store and Dad's somewhere."
"Somewhere, huh?"
"Yeah."
"I brought Nate's boots over. It's still pretty muddy, but I think it's nice enough to go out doors."
"We thought we might go fishing later."
"Yeah, Dad!" said Nate, his blue eyes taking up about half his face. "Can I go out and look for worms?"
"Sure, Nater," said Jeff. I glanced at the Froot Loops on the table. "Put your hood up."
"Want some coffee, Jeff?" I asked as I poured myself some out of the Mr. Coffee.
"Did Mom make it?" he asked. We both laughed. The only coffee worse than the New York Thruway coffee was our mother's. It was an old line.
"Where there's smoke there's Mother cooking," I said and laughed again.
"Sure, I'll have some, Rob."
"Bye!" said Nate, slamming the back door behind him. Jeff and I sat down at the kitchen table, and Grace wandered into the living room.
"So how do you like community college?"
"It stinks." I said, smiling and looking into the face that would have been mine if I had been born a male and ten years earlier. "It's so mickey mouse, Jeff."
"What are you going to do in the fall?"
"I don't know."
"What do you mean, 'I don't know'." He mimicked my voice.
"Did you know what you wanted when you were twenty?" I asked. He glanced out the window at the partly-cloudy sky and lifted the mug up to his mouth.
"I thought I did."
"I don't even know that much," I said.
"What about what's-his-name? I thought you two were going down south and live happily ever after." He held the mug beside his cheek and smiled at me.
"That didn't work out." I said, pushing the bowl of cereal from in front of me and leaning back in my chair.
"He's not into commitment this week. You men are so inconsistent."
"He's a pretty good kid, but I don't like that tobacco chewing business, though. All those little cups of spit everywhere were disgusting." Jeff pulled a cigarette from his shirt pocket.
"He'll outgrow it, but look who's talking. At least Skoal doesn't cause cancer."
"What?"
"Nothing," I said. "Let's drop it, okay." I shifted my weight in the wooden kitchen chair. "How's the strike going?"
"Shitty," he paused. "No, okay, really; it's going to work for us, it's got to."
"I hope so," I said, drawing figure eights on the tablecloth with my spoon. "Nate's birthday is next week, isn't it?"
"Six-years old," Jeff took a long drag on his cigarette. "I have a six-year old son, and I don't even know where he came from." Grace walked back into the kitchen unsteadily. I saw that her nose was running. "Hi, Gracie, beautiful Gracie. Isn't she a pretty, pretty girl?" said Jeff, bending over to his daughter's height. He looked up at me. "My kids will never have snotty noses," he said in a high pitched voice as he grabbed a floral print napkin out of the plastic holder and put it up to Gracie's nose. "Blow, Honey."

"I wasn't thinking that," I said defensively.

"You were too, don't shit me," I laughed. "See?" He pointed his finger at me. "Just wait, Robbie." Jeff lifted Grace onto his lap and started singing her a truck driver song that I had never heard. I wanted to ask him where he had learned it, but I couldn't think of any reason to.

"I think Mom is going senile," I said.

"We all knew you'd figure it out someday. You're not as dumb as you look," he laughed.

"No, really, she's beginning to repeat herself a lot. Remember how she always used to ask us to let her know if she ever started acting like Grandmother? Well, she never tells us that anymore."

"Come on, Rob, she's not wearing hairnets yet."

"I know, I just see it more because I'm home. You don't know what it's like to live at home now." Jeff bounced Grace on his knees and reclasped a small, red barrette in her hair. I swished the coffee around at the bottom of my mug. "What will you do if the air controllers aren't called back?" I asked.

"I don't know, I could always work with Dad." He looked at me over Grace's head. "I'll do something, Kid, don't worry about me."

"I'm not," I lied. A steady patter began over our heads. "I love the sound of rain on the roof," I said and swung my legs up on the chair beside me, "especially at night in bed."

"Don't you ever get dressed?" Jeff asked, looking for the first time at my robe and bare feet.

"It's Saturday." The back door opened and Nate stomped in.

"I didn't find any worms, will you come out and help me, Rob?"

"It's raining."

"So? Fish love the rain, Rob, really they do."

"Baby, we can't go fishing if it's raining. It's too cold and wet outside." Nate put on his favorite pout face.

"Robin's right, Nate old man. You'd both catch cold."

"I wanted to catch fish."

"Another time, Pal," I said. "There will be plenty of times this spring."

"I want to go home, Dad," said Nate, looking up to his father, his bottom lip still curled to his chin.

"Mommy's resting at home. Grace and I are on the way to the store."

"What kind of store?"

"The grocery store," said Jeff, standing Grace on the floor as he reached behind the kitchen chair for his jacket.

"I'll go with you," said Nate.

"Okay, then, get your things," Jeff paused and looked around. "Where's Grace's coat?"

"Right here," I said, pulling it out from under my feet.

"Give Robin a smooch goodbye, you guys," Grace trotted over to me and gave me a wet kiss.

"No way!" said Nate. I put my hands over my eyes and pretended to cry. "Oh, Robin," he laughed.

"You're not fooling me."

"Thanks for the coffee, Rob," said Jeff as he picked up Grace. "Bye." Grace waved, peeking over from behind my brother's back.

"We'll go fishing next time, you promise?" said Nate at the door, as he slipped his little daypack over his shoulder.

"Sure," I said, half-smiling. The door closed. I stood up and put our mugs in the sink. The bowl of Froot Loops floated in pink milk on the table. "Nate," I said just as the car doors slammed, one after the other. I picked up the bowl and dumped the cereal down the disposal. The kitchen clock said it was only ten a.m., so I climbed the stairs, got into bed, and listened to the rain until sleep came.

I Hope This Is Better Than When You Were Twenty

HEIDI STUKEY

Sometimes I play quiet music
Knowing there is somewhere else I ought to be
Knowing I'm no different from others
Lying on their beds in the dark.

When I wake to dark skies
Pelting tiny shadows on my sheets,
I think of other gray days
At the beach or in my room
And catch the ceiling staring back at me.

One day when you were twenty
I sent a boy to sea, and as he went
He looked into the shaded windows
Of worlds he did not know.
Now he's in the box where you keep special things.
I think I'm in there too.

Love,
Please,
Don't forget to take me out
And look at me sometimes,
At times you lie alone,
I know you do.
Be fragile with me then,
I am with you.

Here I Sit

HEIDI STUKEY

32]

I could choose a quiet life
Filled with easy dinners, screws, and songs.
I could take my rightful share
Of what I fully know I don't deserve
And perform a subtle duty.
I could be a dying sacrifice,
Not so clean, but not yet dead.
I could own a dog and
We could run through fields
and have a perfect time.
My dog and I
But here I sit, uninspired,
Without a hope for lack of wanting one.
Here I sit until I will no longer bear
The quiet's gentle roar.

*To Merlin Of St. Anne's;
Other Than John*

JOY REYNOLDS

[33

a year since the flat
where the rain fell
outside the half-cracked window
in the afternoons--
Merlin was the Bursar's cat
exquisite-eyed Merlin
loved the garden grass,
the corner library window
arching his back every hour or so
proving cats are cats . . .
another summer soon
now
new tenants
new grass for Merlin
more warm cream at tea time--
another unrequited love

The Dill Pickle Two

JOY REYNOLDS

34]

to forget you,
you'll be a whiskered cucumber
summer bleached
back yard garden
i'll pick you
with my grandmother's hands
soak you
in dill
pickle you
with the hands
specked
like the kettle
you'll sour in

BECCA KLAUDER

[35



BECCA KLAUDER

36]



BECCA KLAUDER

[37



For My Mother's Mother

EL WARNER

A line
is more points than we can imagine.

You walked biggly,
carried a soft stick.

The bed is good, Leonore,
not the day-room
or guest lounge
or nurses in white.
I find you in bed, remain,
avoid your eyes.

Leaves fall.
Dogs bark.

38] Last night, in your sleep,
the priests came
and made you a Catholic.
I want an end for you.
All this fear.

Your blood clots sloppily.
Where are the veins in your hand?
Blue-black Leonore.
Take my hand, it is warm.

Wedding dress.
Children.
You lived here your life.
Not here,
another room, another bed,
a good house.

Who will remember you, Leonore,
after me?

So many lines
all leading here.

Crossing Pennsylvania

EL WARNER

1. Allentown

Who ever heard of Steubenville
and why is that where I'm going?
The man behind the counter said
what is your destination please
and I said Steubenville
like it just came into my head
you see and I might know
someone there or may have known
someone there but don't know now.
I've got to be going somewhere.
With a name things are better.

Better on the bus because
it is air-conditioned padded red and blue.
Better on the bus because my mother
died you know down in West Virginia
and that's where I got on and
I've lived with her for oh ten years
after my husband left me which was
after he got the lung. Married young
which was what we had to do.

But this is not my story.
This is the story of the woman
in Aisle 20 seat A (aisle)
talking to me in seat B (window).
Ohio seems so far away from here,
across this entire state,
this Quaker state. Amish. The Amish
are south of here, and I'm going west
with illusions of manifest destiny
following the trail of Indians by bus.
What settlers and prairiemen
followed first this trail
dropping off in these coal towns
one by one, their children going further
west, their grandchildren further yet?
Born by the ocean I have no choice
but to make this choice, to move left.
I've never known an Indian.

2. Palmerton

[40] Well both of us up at the high school then
him on the baseball team and me
a Precisionette which was a good thing
to be you know not easy to make the squad.
My mamma said I was pretty but
never anything like Betsy Joe Ritter
who was a cheerleader but even then
smoked two packs a day I'd see her
in the bathroom between classes
and all the boys liked Betsy Jo
but Ricky asked me out anyways.
I'd seen him around the Dairy Queen
where we all hung out most nights
and that was oh the eleventh grade
and that next year my pappa himself
having come down with the lung
he just up and quit work he said
Cora I cain't work no more
so I had to work myself then
but Ricky saw me anyways.

These coal towns stretch out
trying to touch each other
separated only by a path
of IGA's and Moose Halls.
Red brick red clay. Soot marked.
The woman actually is Cora Lee
but I can call her just Cora.
Sunlight hangs like smoke in the air.
A Russian Orthodox church rises
like the Taj Mahal beyond the highway.
In Palmerton the man getting on
walks back towards us
wearing a flannel shirt and cap
that states Chevrolet proudly.
A backpack on his back his boots
layered with mud he chews
something behind his beard.
He sits in Aisle 16 seat B.

EL WARNER

Now that fellow strikes the likeness
of Ricky might even be him who knows.
Done up and left me after two kids
not that I can blame him you see
but we wasn't even married but four years
and me not through high school even.
You see he wanted to be a mechanic
and fiddle with cars he was so good
with cars but quit as I couldn't
keep on in the factory being so big by spring
and we were married he went to the mines
and I can't say I blame him though
I can't say it was any fault of mine.
Look out on your left ain't that the town
where they shot that movie I seen
the other night on tv it looks it
did you see it too it was on pretty late
but was good.

3. Mount Carmel

At some point in time
it became evident
that it wasn't enough
to travel over mountains
they must be traveled through
they must be traveled underneath,
that inside these mountains
there was coal --
the prefix to steam.
Did people settle here
because they were tired
and their leather-reined horses
could go no further west,
or did the mines come first,
the mountains underground,
and then the men to man the mines,
the women to bear the men,
the red brick to bear the sun?

42]

How many years did it take
to build this town
and how was it that this town
grew no larger
than a span of wood and brick
car-lined streets half-vacant
and how is it that in Mount Carmel
a Christ is kneeling
in a gas station lot by the highway,
making a rest stop here
so we can rest
while the bus is blessed.

Every year
cars must be brought in
from the country
and granted life
for just one more year
by this statue of Christ
to the right of the pumps
kneeling on concrete
so he can stare through the grill,
Christ by the highway
the two-lane highway
Main Street
Mount Carmel.
Cora and I buy Tastykakes
and coffee
in the 7-11 across the street.

EL WARNER

4. Lewisburg

In July,
when the strawberry season ends.
days wrap themselves in heat
and cornfields grow
tall enough to piss in.
We'd run through the fields
towards the river,
stalks above our heads
but conquerable, still-soft green
and there was a tire swing
by the river
at the deepest eddy
right after the rapids
swimming with our shoes on
because to swing you climb the tree
jump and feel the rope quicken.
I spent my summers by that river.

Here there is no river
here the fields want to conquer
this bus on this highway,
that billboard for Marlboros
that barn and that house
and the fence that surrounds them.
In the center of a state
there is only land,
and because there is no river
no lake no ocean
the people must move slowly
forced to move over land
on slow moving objects
like the yellow tractor
the bus passes.

Everything looks just alike I tell you
people say everywhere is different
but to me it's just alike even down
in West Virginia I'd visit friends
in another town you know and sometimes
not realize I was anywhere different.
Now I hope Steubenville is different
but I doubt it what do you think.

In the center of a state
there is only land.

44]

Did you read this article about Liz Taylor
she's so old but still so young
especially around the eyes
oh I used to dream I was a movie star
like her in that movie about horses
and at night I'd act out scenes
only in my head you see never out loud
and do it until I fell asleep.
Then later I'd think I was a star
to Ricky even though not famous
but because he loved me I thought
we were movie stars acting our lives.
Now I never let the kids watch too much
of that crap on television it's no good
for the brain don't you agree
I wish the kids were here they're back
at my aunt's until I'm settled
and there's a factory in Steubenville
that I hear is hiring why are you
going out do you need a job?

Just out of college
deciding where to go next,
sitting here pretending
the woman in Aisle 12 seat A
might have an answer,
or maybe you Cora,
and did you know
I dated a boy named Rick?

EL WARNER

5.Steubenville

If there hadn't been a sign
I wouldn't have known
that the field split
right down the middle
and became Ohio,
or that the town on the right
is where Cora gets off.
It's larger than most.
She wants to know
if I'll stop by
if I ever pass through Steubenville
and I tell her I will.

What else can I tell her?
I'll never be in Steubenville
but there's so much
I could tell her if I tried,
for instance that in my bag
I have a book about Salome
and that Salome is no different
than Eve or myself or Cora.
No two stories are that different
being stories, being already decided.
I have a bag full of books
all of them about Cora
all of them about myself,
about pioneers heading somewhere
some succeeding
and how can I give her
any of this
without seeming stupid,
without letting her know
that I am Orpheus
because I look back,
always look back.

She is off the bus,
heading somewhere,
which is not my story
having traveled so far
and going further
only to return,
to eventually return.

Guilt

46]

i wasn't really intending to try anything
 that is to say that + intention was
 unintended the way one night i regret
 having a few links the is to say i was
 out that night and there he was i saw him
 from before sometime although i had
 strong opinions and still don't really my
 opinion weren't at this point and so we
 were there and i don't remember much else
 but didn't really think it was so slip
 per like a letter open a letter open
 right into the slot that was already there
 and there's no determination no mean
 ends from these ways i present now no

LESLIE KIRKBY



[47

In the Gray

BECCA KLAUDER

I rose
and walked out into
the cold gray

I crossed
a cornfield
till grayness swallowed
the stalky stubs.

48]

I saw again
the moon.
It looked
white and thin.

I pulled gray thickness
into my lungs.

I watched the gray
by the moon-
-I watched the gray
eat the moon-

Alone-
I was-
afraid-
my-hope-
with morning-
lost-
in-gray-

BECCA KLAUDER

I saw you in the rain.

You asked why I was
in rain
without a coat
and sick.

You were asleep,
when the moon died,
under your quilt
in the warm.

I didn't
try to tell you,
how much
I needed
the cold pricks,
of that rain
on my skin
to remind me-
I was-
distinct-
from-the
-gray-

cantering, cantering

BECCA KLAUDER

50]

What was
to be allowed
on
that morning
when every
silver-green leaf
invited him-
to canter on
and me to
put him-
over the gate
and cantering
cantering through
the field beyond
live as if
this canter
were our last.

Wind moved-
the leaves-
I remembered
what it was
to be allowed
and not allowed.
I pulled my pony up
and turned him away.

BECCA KLAUDER

[51

Night slides quietly
into morning
as the moon
is framed by
less black blue.
The a-harmonic creaking
of metal road gates,
as they are rocked back
mixes with the
equally a-harmonic bird sounds
as though this morning were
a refrain of Cage's.

SPRING 1985





ERRATA

PHOTOGRAPH ON PAGE 17

BY LISA FONDEUR



THE BRAMBLER

SPRING 1985

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SEA BASS

C. BASS

I won't attempt to impress you with my account of the effort it takes to publish a comprehensive representation of the creative mind at Sweet Briar, and I won't bore you with my philosophy of art. Instead, I merely ask that you consider each of the following pieces individually and allow yourself to become sensitive to the expression of each artist. My only regret is that I could not find suitable words to dedicate this **Brambler** to the memory of our dear Chaplain Bloy. Special thanks to Danny Thornton and Sara Adams of Progress Printing.

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SAXOPHONE PLAYER

Again I can hear the distant sound echoing through the long halls of darkness. If I close my eyes I can imagine the solitary figure swaying behind the slightly cracked door. The release of an encaged bird, his captured soul escapes through the glowing instrument and swirls broodingly around him.

The touching sound of the man's feelings and dreams are mainly confined to the shell of the gloomy room. The music rises and falls fretfully struggling to escape the womb. Beautiful thoughts and feelings, spewing out into the air, slipping through the narrow crack and lingering down the long halls caress me.

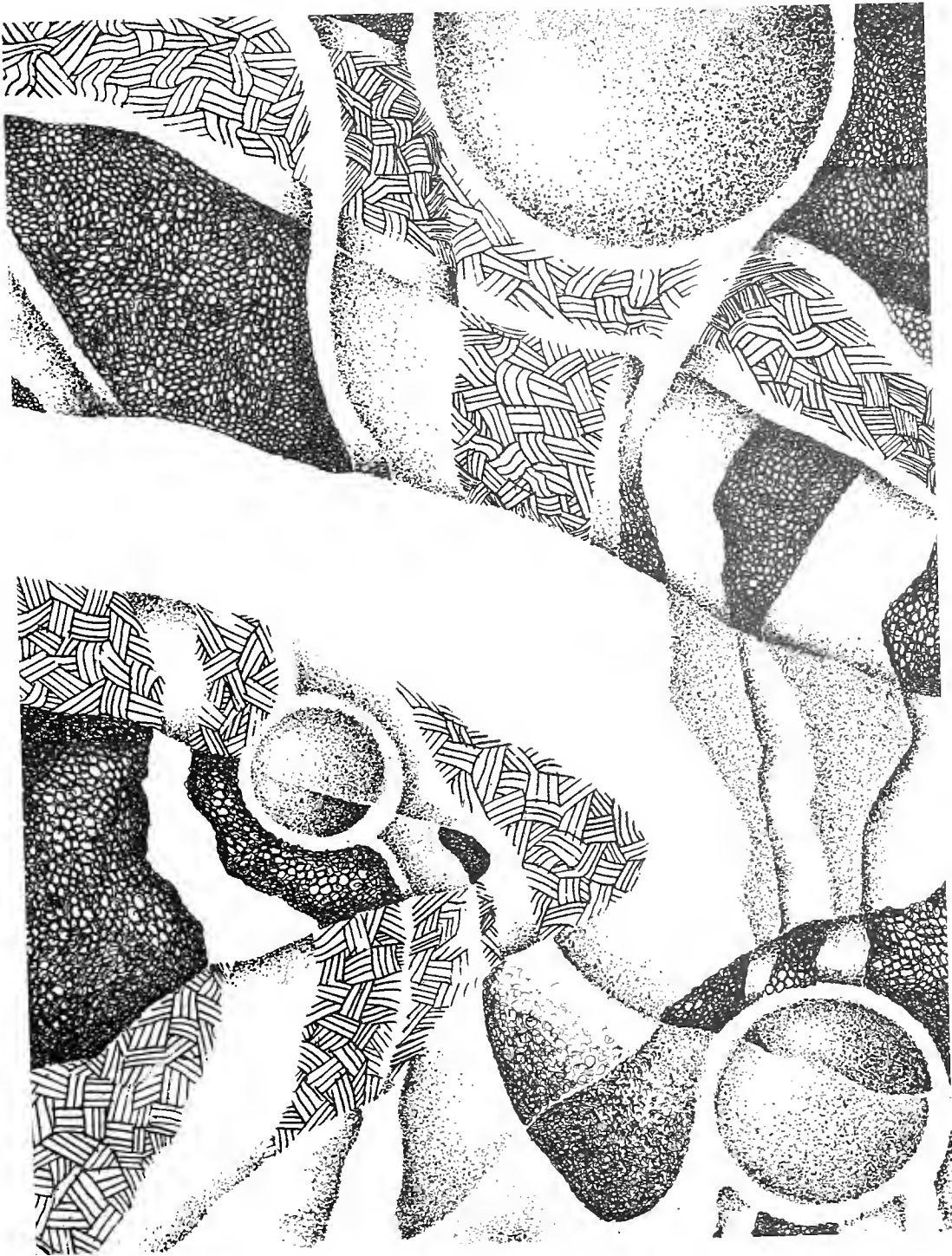
Having lured me to the cracked door, the music reveals the wavering of so desperate a shadow crooning a lifetime portrait into the stagnant air. With the final note of cadenza, his turmoil is over; the portrait crumbles and flutters to the ground, leaving the cage empty. Placing his instrument to the side, the musician steps towards the heavy door and views the empty hall. With his eyes downcast, he drops his hand to the door knob and swings the door to its close.

Only the tiniest space exists for people to observe and understand; this is the narrow opening between the artist and the world. Sadly, little praise seeps through the cracks of the cold wall separating the artist from his audience.

Picking up his saxophone, the artist moistens his mouthpiece, caressing the keys and plays ecstasy in the sunlight.

WALKING AT NIGHT

Things move
all around me
every day.
Take it down
the slow way,
feet first.
Distances fade.
At night
the sky reflects
all our lights.
A stillness
that goes
the way we go.
Sometimes rustles
the grass.
Quick glow
like cat's eyes.
Planets orbit
somewhere above
even when we
can't see them.
Even when
we sleep
even when the sun
whites out
everything else
but daylight.
I have nowhere
to go.
My walk
a circle
beginning and ending
at the same
address.





MY FATHERS

Fleeting moments go by
and tears come to my eyes
when I see my uncle's shaking leg.
The familiar jerk reminds me of his brother, my Grandaddy.
He walks carefully now as Grandaddy did.
My Grandaddy was so kind,
they say he never met a stranger;
and he was so good.
He had such a sharp mind and
he was a Judge
and he was a good one,
so good he was elected to the State Supreme Court
and I'm so proud.

But I remember holding his frail hand
as he slumped in his wheelchair
and his eyes looked into nowhere.
And I would hold his cold hand
and try to make it warm
and every now and then he would clench my hand tight
and sometimes his eye would move and look up at me
and I would try hard not to cry
but the tears would come
and I would cry.

He lay in bed deteriorating each day
so still and helpless
as though he had no mind.
My Grandaddy didn't die right,
some power had drained his body--
but his eyes revealed his soul.
I remember looking at his face so closely
his watery eyes always dripped
down his blemished face.
Those cloudy eyes would sometimes move
and his hand would sometimes grasp.

My Granddaddy who loved me so much
used to whistle that high quick whistle from his porch
when I had wandered off.
And he would pick me up on Saturday
in his grey Buick that always had clean floormats
and a roll of paper towels in the back.
And he would take me to Kern's Cafe
and I would sit with my chin rested on the table
and the men would be all around us;
the smell of coffee and the smell of his sweater, I remember.

And at the register he would let me pick out as many
Lifesavers as I wanted and I would carry them raveling the
paper in my hand as we would walk to the fish market
where I with red-candied lips would watch
the man with big tan arms butcher
the white wet catfish meat.

And then Eunice would fry it
and it was always so tender
and we would sit on the glassed-in porch
or at the counter in the kitchen
and the doors and windows would be open
and the warm noon air would absorb the smell of fried catfish
and Eunice always made vanilla custard for dessert
and always every Saturday I spent with Granddaddy.

And Saturday night he'd sit in his big lounge chair and watch
Lawrence Welk and I'd be on the floor with my head on my hands
right in front of the television waiting for my favorite shows
and everytime Mannix would start to come on
I'd jump up and kiss his face on the screen
and Granddaddy would always laugh.

And I remember later when I was older,
around eleven or twelve,
he tried to give me a manicure
because my fingernails were dirty
and I remember my hand resting on his palm
as his other hand held the file
but his hand shook too much
and he couldn't do it
and I laughed
but I knew it wasn't funny
and he looked up at me so serious
and his eyes were so hurt and
he knew he was getting old.

The night after his funeral
I cried so hard next to his grave.
It was the night of my prom
and I stood in my white dress
under the tent filled with flowers
and I touched the fresh dirt
that covered my Granddaddy
and I asked that he forgive me
for laughing that time
and I felt his assurance.

And still I cry when I think of him;
there was never a greater man that I knew
and never a man so cheated in his last years.
And now I see my Daddy and fleeting moments go by
when his face reveals Granddaddy's features
and my stomach knots up and sometimes I cry
when I think of Daddy.





BUS

I was on a bus once
and there was a woman
next to me
and she talked the whole time
which was three hours.
She said,
“You know I’m poor
because I was born poor
my father was a stupid drunk
and I married one of the same
dumb fuckers. I live on welfare
but I don’t mind
because I worked for so long
and the government
took my money from me
and gave it to the niggers
all those years
so I get what’s coming.
Those goddamn niggers
and drunks all my life
my father killed himself
finally thank God he was worthless
and they told me to leave school
after that because we were no good
my family. No education
and I eat in restaraunts
where people with less education
wearing paper hats take your money.
We all get what’s coming.”

I sat and listened
even though the whole bus
was staring at her, and me,
because ealier
at the station
I'd seen her give
her last pack of cigarettes
to a young woman
who was barefoot
even though it was raining,
with eyes not quite right,
while I had refused
the same favor
a few minutes ealier.



ODD JOBS

Elanne and Hunter were having diner in a small, quiet resturant in Charleston. The food was good, the wine was better. "God, I really love this place. When I went to the Citadel, Bill and I used to sneek over here after rugby practice and have a few drinks. Then one day, we got caught. Freshmen aren't supposed to have fun, you know."

"It's kind of funny," he said, "we joined the rugby team so we could get off campus every now and then and not have to shine belt buckles all the time, but then we got caught coming here and were assigned to late gate duty for a month which is twice as bad as shining buckles." He took a sip of wine. "I don't think it ever rained so much in the history of North Carolina." Thinking back, he stared into the flame of the candle on the table. "There is nothing worse than gate duty in the rain and then standing in those puddles for so many hours makes it twice as hard to shine your shoes, and...ugh!" He broke the stare. "Bad memories." Hunter then smiled and leaned in toward the finger Elanne ran down the side of his face. "I like it here too." Elanne said, looking around the dimly lit resturaunt. "But why Charleston? I mean isn't it kind of a long way from Virginia for just a weekend?"

"I know...I don't know. I haven't been back here since I dropped out of the Citadel. But I've always really liked the city itself. And *you've* never beenhere before." Hunter reached over to squeeze Elanne's hand. "And I just wanted to go someplace where we could be alone for a weekend. No roommates. No faternity brothers..."

"Good enough," Elanne said, smiling. "We certainly are far enough away from anybody we know. "Oh, wait" she said suddenly. "Didn't your mysterious second cousin Fat Harry move here a while ago...after they ran him out of Ashville? The one that nobody knows exactly what it is he does, only that he makes a lot of money doing it."

"Yeah, I guess he did," Hunter admitted forgetting he had told her this, and fidgeting in his chair.

"So have you done any more of those 'odd jobs' for him lately? What is it that you do? Drive here and there and then drive back to his place and get handed a lot of money?"

"Something like that," Hunter said into his wine glass.

"Come on, Hunter. I mean, do you know or do you just do what you're told and not ask questions?"

"Oh, I think I have a pretty good idea," was Hunter's only reply. "Want some more wine?" he asked as he poured her another glass.

"You know what this place reminds me of?" he said, glancing around the room.

"Yeah," Elanne laughed. "That little place in Gatlinburg we stumbled into the day you were supposed to take me home, but didn't." They both laughed, remembering what had happened that night for the first time, after they had both had too much to drink in a similar little restaurant.

"I bet you had that all planned, didn't you?" Elanne said squinting one eye and looking a little suspicious. Hunter shrugged his shoulders, then winked and leaned over to kiss her cheek. She blushed.

Just then, Fat Harry appeared at a large table behind Hunter and Elanne. He was sitting there alone,

but taking up two places. Hunter recognized him and had already motioned for him to come over before he had realized what he had done.

"Speak of the devil. Look who's here."

Elanne glanced around and spotted the large man.

"Fat Harry? He's here? Great! I finally get to meet this Abominal Green Machine."

"Shh. Here he comes. Be nice."

As Harry waddled over his body appeared to grow and his head seemed to shrink.

"Harry, good to see you, cuz. This is Elanne, remember? I told you about her a month or so ago."

Harry stretched out his fat hand to shake with Elanne. Hunter noticed that his fingertips were green, but Elanne didn't.

"So you're Elanne," Harry said as he gave her the once-over. "It's too bad, Hon, isn't it too bad, Hunter?" Then he began to laugh. "Bet he says he loves you too, didn't he darlin? You know, he didn't plan on falling in love."

"Yes, we're very much in love, thanks." Elanne blushed. She could not hear the sarcasm in his voice, the meanness.

"Well, she certainly is a pretty little thing. Hunter, and she seems so nice."

"Stop it, Harry, don't!" Hunter said with a certain determination and anger.

The fat man only waddled back to his table which was now full of familiar faces, familiar to Hunter. There were six middle-aged ladies all dressed in sequined evening gowns, with minks around their shoulders and diamonds in their ears, and one fat-lipped man in his late twenties who was tall, lanky, and smoked a woman's cigarette in a filter. And all the way back, Fat Harry kept mumbling, "Pretty girl, too. Damn pretty. Sure is a looker."

When he got to his place, he turned around and shouted, "She *is* attractive, Hunter, but then so are *they*." He smiled a fat smile to the ladies. "And they are *rich*, too. And so is he," he said, pointing to the effeminate gentleman. "But of course, you know all that don't you Hunter?" Harry was now yelling even louder, and throwing his drink around as he spoke with his hands. Then he whispered something to his guests and they all began to giggle.

"Harry seems like a pretty nice guy to me. Kinda wierd, but pretty nice. I mean he doesn't seem like the type that would be into illegal dealings, or whatever it is that he does."

"Lanne, could we go now?" he said staring at the table behind her.

"But love, you haven't even finished your steak. Aren't you hungry?" She didn't hear the party behind her, nor could she see them, but Hunter could see them. Their laughter had become louder as they began folding one hundred dollar bills into paper airplanes and flying them over to their table. All of the airplanes kept landing in Hunter's lap.

"You're not serious, are you? Look, there's still wine left, and I'm sure your cousin will want us to have a drink with him later." Hunter glanced at Elanne to let her know that he *was* serious, but he was again drawn to the scene beyond her. The large table of guests had turned into a round bed with red satin sheets; the sequined-guests on it, Harry standing behind it. One of the women whispered,

"Come on, You're not in love with *her*. You couldn't be, or else you wouldn't..."

"I am. Yes I am." Hunter squeezed his hands over his ears.

"Okay, Okay," Elanne said trying to calm him down. We can leave, I don't mind."

His ears and eyes were shut tight, but he could still hear and see them. They just kept laughing and saying in whispers that were louder than normal voices:

"You betrayed her, Hunter."

"You lied to her."

“Every time that you’re with us - every time you’re with her.”

“But I hated it, Harry. I hate it!” Hunter yelled at the fat man.

In an attempt to make it all go away, he waved his arms and accidentally knocked over a glass.

“Sweetheart, be careful. Let me get that up.” Elanne reached over the table with her napkin.

“Hunter, hated what? What are you talking about?”

“You don’t understand, I know. But I didn’t mean to. I didn’t know you when it first...I’m so sorry, Elanne. I didn’t mean to hurt you. It won’t happen again. I won’t do it again.” he repeated over and over as the restaurant grew larger and brighter, and the laughter grew louder and echoed and resounded. Hunter began to cry and then let out a scream that made everything stop and go dark.

Then he rolled over. His arm hit something warm and soft that made him afraid to open his eyes. “I did it again.”

“Did what again, love?”

“What?” he said. He opened his eyes and they adjusted to the blue and grey interior of a hotel room.

“You said, ‘I did it again.’ Did what again?”

While Elanne was waiting for an answer, she began to stroke his hair. “You must have had one hell of a dream.”

“Why? What did I say?” Hunter asked quickly as his heavy breathing began to slow to normal.

“I couldn’t tell much of anything else. You just mumbled a lot, and ... twitched, kind of. Like you were scared, or something. What was it about?”

Remembering the nightmare, feeling the guilt, he answered, “I ...I don’t know. I forgot.” He turned over and faced the wall. “Just a bad dream, I guess.”

Elanne threw one leg over his and began scratching his back. It was late at night. Six cars drove through the big puddle in the street outside their door before he turned back over to face her and said,

“Could you just hold me for a minute, please?”

“Sure, love,” she replied a little confused.

As Elanne hugged him, he wrapped his arms around her tiny frame and squeezed so tightly that it became almost uncomfortable for her. She was going to ask again about the dream, but she noticed he was shaking just slightly. Then, she felt warm tears on her chest.

“Hunter?” She held his head tighter against her chest and stared into the darkness.

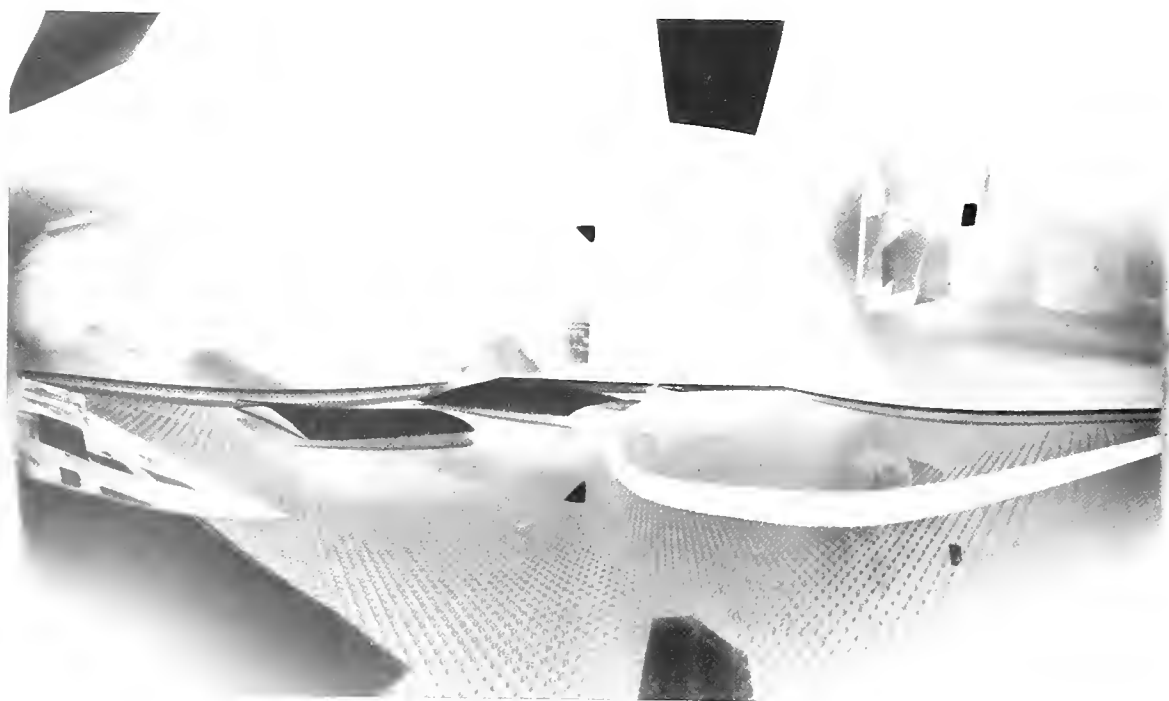
“Hunter, what’s wrong?”

He only squeezed her again. “Elanne... I love you. I love you so much.”

“I love you, too,” she said, and asked no more questions.

But he continued to cry.

“Shh,” she said, patting his head. “It was only a dream. Shh.”



WITNESS CHAIR

I sit
 alone at last.
I wait
 and wait.
I hear
 footsteps.
I hope
 they'll pass.
 They don't.
 They invade.
I wait
 and wait
 for them to leave.
I look
 at the ceiling above me
 at the walls around me
 at the floor below me.
I feel
 the hair fall into my face.
I blow
 the hair away.
I look
 at my shoes
 at my hands.
I twist
 the rings on my fingers.
I close my eyes
 and breathe.
I clench my fists
 and breathe.
I wait
 and wait.



POLITICAL POEM

While in Russia my ancestors
were Bolsheviks and in Germany
Jews, both my parents are Democrats.
My father believes the problems
of the country would be solved
if Ted Kennedy were President,
but my mother and I both think
that his real loss at Chapaquidick
was just that dream, which has
all the wrappings of justice
even if more could always
be done in that name.

There must have been a time
when looking at the moon
we saw the bald gleaming head
of Khrushchev, laughing us into
a race for the galaxies.
We don't really need nature
anyway. All those trees.
We just might be the winner
as long as we destroy it first.

I read that under protest
they banned some books the other day
in Peoria. There are some freedoms
that I want too. For instance
to go to bed and get up each day
whenever I want never needing

to work, aristocrat that I am,
or to be allowed to kiss anyone
I want in public, which makes me
somewhat of a socialist,
and most of all to only worry
about myself and noone else,
which must imply that I
am a totalitarian at heart.
We thank God however
that we live in this great nation
where there is no need for Sandinistas
fighting for what they feel
are their basic human rights
against people who are fighting
in return for the very same reason.

No one owns anything anyway.
And when it comes right down to it
we all wanted the same things
when we were young. To be
an astronaut, a movie star,
the richest person in the world,
or President of the United States.



A STORY

The hills could be seen only by their blackness sketched against the sky. Like steel beads hanging from threads the stars glimmered quietly behind them. A chilling wind wavered through the hills towering above the small wooden house of which the sound of laughter rose from the lighted windows.

The girl, walking along the dimly lighted street, turned and looked at the house. She felt glad to be alone and away from it even though she loved the place dearly. Looking up at the stars she heard the thrashing trees as they swayed on the hill and sent awesome sounds of power down upon her. She wondered why the hills seemed so dominant and powerful; they were even mystifying to her. "Maybe it's because of the old cemetery up there," she thought, "or because those hills have been there so long. Maybe that's why they seem to have such authority."

The hills rose abruptly to impressive heights looking over the towns crumbling buildings and Negro shacks. The hills held the town's last treasure - the cemetery. Under the drooping moss and vines nestled the rusted but elegant wrought-iron fences separating the family plots. The thin, leaning tombstones marked each spot of sunken earth and the worn letters etched upon the surface of the stones could barely be read. Whether it was the cemetery or not, those hills were mystifying, especially to the black people who made up just about the entire population. The hills were sacred to them and they would not dare venture up there after dark because, as they told it, "There haints up there!"

The girl remembered Hansel, the biggest and tallest member of their deer camp as he had said to a black boy from down the street, "Boy, I'll go up there and put this fifty dollar bill on one of those tombstones for you and if you go up there and get it after dark, it's yours to keep." After hearing the offer the boy's eyes widened, the whites of his eyes bulged from his black shiney skin and he had said, "I ain't no fool! I ain't going up there till I die n'surely no sooner fa' fifty dollars. M-m-m," shaking his head, "There haints up there!" She smiled remembering this but she knew she didn't blame him.

She reached the store on the corner of the street, "Miss Arcola's Store" and sat down on the log-posted porch. It was closed and dark. There was the smell of age in its wood. She leaned back against the store's wall. "I wonder if I'll kill a deer tomorrow..." she thought, "I can see it now... they don't think there are any deer up there in the hills, well I know there are, I've seen them. They can just keep on hunting by the river. One day I'm going to surprise them. They'll all be sitting on the porch after the morning hunt, listening to a football game or waiting for lunch, and all of a sudden they'll hear "G-BAM" real loud from the hills... and they'll wonder if it's me. Then I'll stroll up through the gate with a big grin on my face - there'll be blood on my shirt and hands but I won't care because I'll be proud... and I'll say, "Naw, there no deer up there, just a dead 14 point buck." And they'd be so proud of me, especially Daddy, and Mister Ernest, too!... And they'd all go up there and we'd drag him down... and Mister Ernest would be so proud..." There in the cold darkness with only the weak street light penetrating its thickness, her figure was barely revealed, slumped against the old grey wooden store.

Her father's calling startled her. Jumping up, she ran towards his vague figure in the street.

"Where have you been?" he asked.

"Oh, just walking around."

"We're about to draw, if you want to hunt in the morning, you better get in there. Now where do you want to hunt?"

"Daddy, you know where" she replied with an upward glance to the hills.

"Yeah, honey I know. But you be careful up there, it's easy to lose your footing and you could fall down in one of those hollows. We'd have a hard time finding you too. Be sure not to stay up there too long so I won't start worrying," he put his arm around her shoulder as they walked back to the camp.

"Daddy, I'll be careful." As they hugged standing on the front porch, the voices filled with excitement drifted from inside. They turned and walked in.

The draw began promptly at 9:00 as usual. The seriousness hung over the room as thick as the cigarette smoke curling to the ceiling. Mr. Simpson rattled the plastic jug filled with numbers and handed it to one of the men. It passed from hand to hand and deposited a prize or disappointment in a little red button, which was carefully concealed with a cupped hand. She looked at each man's face and wondered what invisible strategies were going on in each of their minds. She looked at Mr. Ernest, the lines on his forehead and between his eyes were deeply engraved; they were more obvious than usual as he waited his turn. He looked at her, his head tilted and his eyes squinted as he took a drag of his Kent cigarette; he winked at her and, smiling, she looked away feeling embarrassed. His calmness in all situations and his cool gestures were etched in her memory. She could imitate him perfectly; sometimes she found herself unconsciously walking, talking with her head tilted in his fashion using the phrases he used often. She had accepted him as her idol ever since he had first taken her hunting with him. He used to insist upon having her sit on a stand with him when she had first started hunting at the camp with her father and brother. Mister Ernest would tell her everything he thought she needed to know about deer hunting and she would sit there, memorizing every word he said, but sometimes found herself marvelling at the attention he gave to her rather than his words. She felt very partial to the man and he returned her special attention given to him.

There among the circle of men, thinking back over the years, she noticed that she had become one of them - that they had begun to treat her as a deer hunter who had enough experience to be treated as an equal. Her thoughts were broken as Mister Simpson spoke, "I think I'll hunt up in the cemetery tomorrow!" Clenching his cigar between his teeth he looked at her with a twinkle in his eye and she knew he was only teasing her. They knew she felt possessive over the hills behind the camp house since she chose to spend most of her time hunting there rather than by the river with them. Even though everybody had the right to hunt in the hills since it was legally the town's land, she had no worry about the man hunting there. She knew they wouldn't want to walk that far to hunt for it was hard to climb. They were perfectly content hunting on the flat land beside the river. She smiled at Mister Simpson and watched him write her name down with 'cemetery' beside it.

After the draw, the crowd dispersed into different rooms, most went to bed except for Mister Ernest, Mister Nations and her. She propped her feet in the chair in front of the fire and watched the flames change into millions of different shapes around the oak log. Listening to the men talk, she wondered why they always seemed to be the last ones to go to bed. There she listened to Mister Ernest's authoritative voice as he lectured about some trivial subject to the other man. She smiled, remembering how she had marvelled at the man. Content, in front of the fire, the scent of their bourbon rising to her nose, she knew this was where she wanted to be during the winter months. The only time she felt like this was at the camp with her friends. The smell of bourbon, tobacco and the fireplace with the

relaxed hunters telling stories in sacred tones had merged in the tingling atmosphere of the deer season to make the old run-down house a haven and home for them. She knew she had a life elsewhere but the camp was all she could have asked for. Hearing the two men walk out of the room, she knew their intoxicated minds were drawing them to the comfort of their beds. The fire swelled and as she watched it burn, scorching through her eyes, she knew the times at the camp would be gone. Things would change for she knew she was growing up; nothing lasts forever. Exhausted, she went and kissed her father's forehead while he slept, breathing heavily. Turning out all the lights in the house, she walked to the room where she would sleep. Passing through the room glowing from the fireplace, the smells still hovered. She stood in front of the fire watching it burn. Shuddering, she turned and walked to her room quietly and crawled in bed. She lay there gazing through tears across the room towards the little red glow of Mister Ernest's cigarette as he smoked in bed, and there, in the dark, she felt warm.





PIECE

Drunk writing last night, so now I continue with what I was saying. It's like this: today is Melissa Gaffney's birthday. I haven't seen her in two years, but I remember. I remember those summers on the Delaware building the treehouse, swimming in the river, spending nights drunk later, not the first summers with the fields and farms and tire swing. When Amy came to Easton I forgot to show her the farmlands, around Nazareth and east, across New Jersey and further, to the Poconos and New York. Sitting in the car, the sun sets on my left - we are traveling northeast, on a back road in New Jersey. An old line from an old poem, that one. About a buddha and Victorian houses and strawberries and the feeling driving to the flea market those mornings, alone with the sunrise through the cornfields.

Melissa Gaffney is all gone. Somewhere in Colorado, I think. I'd like to go there. Seeing the country is a dream for me, seeing the country all the way to China. China is rickshaws across the barren plain, slanted eyes and everything upside-down. I want someday to write something about China. I'd like to dream myself awake and wake myself to sleep also. All literary allusions intentional. I'd like to say happy birthday to Melissa Gaffney. I'd call her long-distance, all the way to Colorado somewhere. I'd say, "It's your birthday and I'm listening to the Stones" and she'd remember too, those things. I'd like to arrange words on paper. I'd like to take words and bundle them up and wrap them and send them somewhere as a present. I'd send them to New Jersey, to the second cornfield past the railroad tracks on River Road, marked "Photo Enclosed - Hand Stamp". These words would be arranged so nicely on paper the willows would stop weeping just once and listen. An old line from an old poem, that one. About exactly that kind of present.

The truth is I'm not listening to the Stones right now, and the man on the radio wants me to send my dollars for a better tomorrow. I should call him and tell him that until recently I didn't even know how to spell the word, and so it would be silly to send my dollars for it. I should be as polemic as possible, throw in some trite and maudlin and redundancy, place into pot and stir. Last night I cooked soup for myself. Last night I drank a fifth of gin halfway down, ate my soup, lay in bed. This is a journal, reader. Last night I went to sleep. I woke up this morning. I didn't remember any of the dreams they tell you you've had even if you don't remember them. To be a beautiful piece of music is a dream for me, to actually dream I was all those notes, all those pitches up and down the grand staff. To be such a fragmented representation of a continuous and fluid whole, but to feel myself played inside and out when someone is playing me.

There is so much I didn't get to say last night. I want to continue with it now. I'm continuing with it now. It's like this: I drove for hours today - I was traveling on a back road. The sun wasn't setting or rising. I was passing through horsefarms, south of Charlottesville, Virginia and west of the ocean. Sometimes I dream I'm in a place where there is no way of finding direction and I'm in China, seeing the country, and Melissa Gaffney and all the farmlands in New Jersey are there too. Sometimes I think of my family at Christmas, a car-ride and picnics, a home in America. That was a Christian missionary in Kenya speaking, not me in Virginia who rides in cars so often. An old line from an old poem, reader, journal. I've been remembering what it is I've been trying to say all this time, and didn't get to again last night. It's like that.



**I KNOW I CAN DO SOMETHING FOR 12 HOURS
THAT WOULD APPALL ME IF I FELT THAT I
HAD TO KEEP IT UP FOR A LIFETIME.**

“Now Price, be nice to her. She’s probably just as nervous as we are. Please, for my sake, don’t get her mad.”

“I’m here, aren’t I? I’ll be god-damn nice, but she doesn’t deserve it. Not after everything she’s done.”

Price pushed the revolving door so it made one revolution. I led the way to the information desk.

“Um, excuse me. Could you tell me where Mrs. Harcourt is staying?”

A woman in her middle sixties looked up, and with a loud audible sigh, started shuffling through a file. She lifted her gray head, looking over her brown, half-mooned reading glasses.

“Oh yes. Dr. Stevens told me to expect you. Your mother is waiting in the lounge, right around the corner.” Pointing with her pen she added, “Is he over sixteen? Because we have rules here...”

“Yes! I am,” Price said, exasperated. He rolled his eyes and mumbled, “Jesus Christ.”

“You’re a little short for your age, aren’t you?”

“Price, forget it. Come on, let’s get this over with.”

We walked around the corner. The lounge was the size of a basketball court filled with sofas and straight-back chairs. The fabric of the furniture looked like the seats on American Airlines. The same matching print hung around the two windows, which overlooked the parking lot. Newspapers and magazines lay scattered on the sofas. On the walls hung sayings like, “Don’t Quit,” and “I know I can do something for twelve hours that would appall me if I felt I had to keep it up for a lifetime.” A few women sat in their robes, talking to visitors. One lady in a bright pink robe with matching slippers leaned against the wall, her eyes closed. I scanned the room for her.

Price nudged me. “Jackie, there she is. Oh shit. Wait, what are you going to say? Why the hell did you drag me here anyway? I don’t have anything to say to her and neither should you! She made you miserable, made Dad leave and made...”

“Would you shut-up, asshole, she’s coming!” I said with clenched teeth.

I wiped my sweaty palms on the seat of my khaki shorts and attempted to smile. Price stuck his hand in his jeans and nervously shook the change in his pocket. I took two steps forward and stopped. She wore the royal blue housecoat that Price and I gave her for Mother’s Day. Her wet hair hung straight, brushing her shoulders. Her face was creased with worry.

“My babies! Thank you so much for coming. Isn’t it nice here? The people are so friendly and the doctors are so understanding. And you know, I haven’t wanted a drink since I’ve been here. I know I’m getting better. I just know it. You’ll see, I’ll be out of here in no time. And we’ll be family again. A real one.” She nervously continued, her hand shook as she nervously reached for mine, “and you know what? My doctors said I never really had a problem. They said I just couldn’t handle a lot of pressure. I’m fine now, I really am.”

Price shifted his weight back and forth, not once catching her eyes. Awkwardly, I stood in front of

her while she squeezed my hand.

"Well, tell me about you, Jackie. How is the yearbook, or is it the newspaper? I can't remember. Which is it?"

"The yearbook."

"Oh, that's right. And Price, how is wrestling?"

"Wrestling was over a month ago. I'm playing ice hockey now."

"Well, um... how's Daddy? Now that I'm allowed visitors, do you think he will come?"

"I doubt it. He's really busy. Besides, this is the last time *I'm* coming to visit. I have practice every day after school, and I had to cut it to come here."

"Well... what about you, Jackie? You'll come visit me, won't you?" She pleaded.

I did not answer. I stared at her ankles. The cuts had not healed yet, and the accident had happened a month ago.

"Oh these cuts are getting much better. I finally remembered what happened. I realize I had had a few too many."

I looked at her accusingly and blurted out, "You had a hell of a lot more than that, Mom! You were wasted! You humiliated all of us, standing on the goddamn glass coffee table. And don't think I'll ever get over the two years of pure hell you put us through."

Tears streamed down her haggard face. She folded her arms around herself and sat down on a sofa. She rocked back and forth, shaking.

"Oh Jesus, Mom, I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. I didn't mean it. I'm just so goddamn tierd. You do look good and I know you're getting better. We're all looking foward to your coming home. Dad is too. We'll make a new start and this time if we all try it will work. Right, Price?"

"Uh huh."

"And Mom, don't worry, I'll keep doing what I've been doing around the house, so you'll have more time to do stuff that *you* want to do, okay?"

"Baby, do you mean it? I know this time I'm ready to start living again, constructively. But I can't do it alone. If you'll help me, we'll be a family again... I'm so excited, I have a really good feeling about all of this."

"Me too."

Price walked around the room, looking through the window. I sat down beside her and craddled her in my arms. She pulled a Kleenex out of her pocket and blew her nose.

"Now run along, you need to fix dinner for Daddy. He hates it when dinner is late. Come back soon."

"Okay, Mom, take good care of yourself." A male nurse led her out of the lounge.

"Jackie, do you think she'll change this time?"

"I don't know, I just don't know."

Price and I started going around the corner, hearing the echo of her voice, and the squeaking of the nurse's sneakers on the linoleum.

LISA FONDEUR





THINKING AND WONDERING AND THINGS BUT NOT A POEM

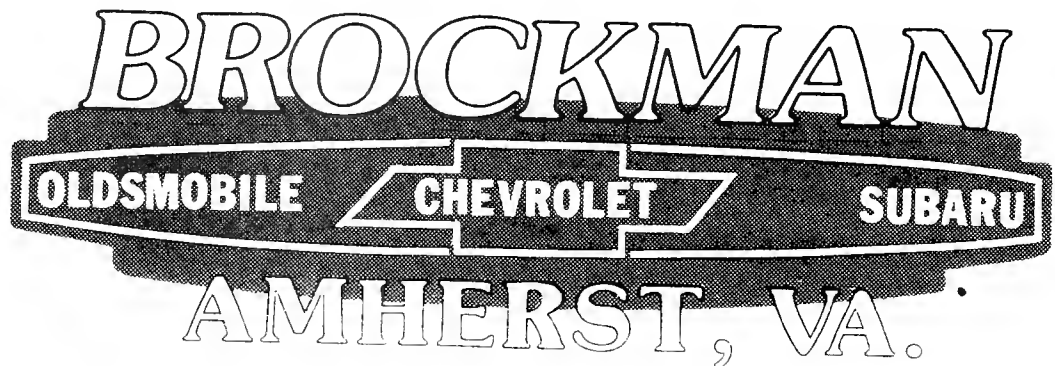
I am sitting here wondering if other people sit around and wonder if they are the only people who think of certain things, or if they realize that I do the same thinking, deciding, wondering... And I think there must be a way to put all this down in a nice, neat package of words, but I can't figure out how to do it. If I could I'd be like all those poets who are thinking of things and deciding that noone else thinks about them so they put it down in that neat package of words and share it with the rest of us if we figure it out.



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The Brambler

Spring 1986

The Brambler Spring 1986

"All of art is a lie that reveals the truth."

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The 1986 *Brambler* is dedicated to Janet Sylvester.

photography





Shannon Wood





Cindy Addison





Cindy Addison





poetry

The Widow

She sweeps the porch
And watches the leaves
Bounce on the wind.
She extends the broom
To knock away
The hanging cobwebs,
And remembers
Another Autumn—
A hand in hers,
A child in her arms.
She leans against
The broom and dreams of
Starting over

Laura Dean

The Bather

He sits on the river bank
clothes strewn about him
watching one friend call to another
as water ripples,
and sailboats move sleekly by

He wonders whether to go in
His feet dangle in cool water,
as it quickly,
unexpectedly, splashes up

The smell of air is good,
and the sun warm
As he lies back on the bank,
he dreams.

Elizabeth Rundlett

Blackberries

The making makes me weepy, but I tell myself
I look strong on the outside,
this sword my only protection.
Each of these leaves is a soldier in my camp.
Now they have all come together to form a mountain
I climb.
I sink.
Mom is calling me in to help fold the sheets.
Come **on**, *that stuff is for sissies!*
I'm not a girl!
But there's no one else,
and Jeff and Jimbo are nowhere in sight.
Football practice lasts until suppertime.
At ease, I say to my men.
I run to the laundry room,
a knight to my lady's rescue.
My side won't fold,
and Mom is trying to be shorter
without hitting the floor.
Teamwork, she says, is the key to success.
Someday you'll understand what I mean.
I nod, thinking of my army out there waiting,
being blown away.
I wait for my uniform to finish,
before she'll let me out.
Then, I spy that old purple pair,
and like Bond, I plan Mission B.
I can't wait to win the world.

Callie Johnson

To Nowhere

Riding a bus in a midwestern city, watching out the windows as the rows pass in neat little rows, ready to be picked. Bored with the bus and its greasy upholstery that slides over me, leaving me with thoughts of what sat before me. Listening to the conversations around me, again hearing of the boredom hidden in innocent small talk that eventually turns you down into jello. Faces don't mean anything on a bus. They wear the universal expressions of everything you could think of but would rather not. The tired hum on this hot path through Corn Country, U.S.A., and I know that what I hope to find is actually what I left behind. And I will think of straight lines and arrows when I slide off this bus, and not about messy highways that intersect and jumble and lead nowhere.

Karen Gonyea

The Unborn

I felt the warmth
Of her body,
The small of my back
Nestled against its curve,
I imagined
The bitter taste of her breast
The soothing sound of her voice
The scent of her hair,
That I would inherit

Impatient
I waited,
For her
Who made me,
Nature's shears
Carving me into what I would be
But she who bears me
Is my God

Today
I no longer have these visions,
Just dull pressure
Tugging me from the warmth,
And no voice
With which to beg
For the world.

Scarlett Roitman

Back and Forth

She shivered in damp sheets
and stared at four sides of a ceiling
Her heart beats speeded
as she listened to a fan
blow back and forth

Counting from a hundred to one
kept the sound of his laugh, and her voice
from mixing with songs
that clashed

Each time she pressed her hands to her face,
each time, she whispered,
but none of it stopped

When she could feel she believed
she was a saint and devilish fool,
she got up,
forcing herself to move

Corinne Neale

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Corinne Neale

Love Poem

What makes you think I'm an expert
You love your '69 convertible Corvette
You love your green and red striped Guller watch
Your Gianni Versace black leather jacket
with gloves to match, your brown Baily's,
Or your best old pair of blue jeans
You can even love
The way Pam Grier's tits shook in Coffey
But me?
You want me,
You want my lips so juicy,
My swollen breasts with hardened nipples
And my tender rounded hips
You want my thighs smooth and fat
And the thickness between them
But there's more to me
Than my sweet chocolateness
When are you going to learn?

Andrea M. Kane

Nantahala God

Loud, rolling waters
Tumble over rocks
Which fling themselves up
To the uncut sky
The canoeist strains
To bring his canoe
Under some semblance
Of reasonable,
Concurrent control.
Relentless waters,
However, deny
The J stroke, breaking
The K-2 paddle.
The deafening noise
Of the waterfall
Blinds the river guide.
Numbing panic grips
His powerful arms.
The unpassable
Falls yawn to accept
The aluminum
Coffin. God summoned
Intervenes with death
The nylon rope, hurled
From the precipice above,
Curls adeptly down
Into his hands.

kathryn Shannnonhouse

An American Hero

He was an ass. His family had realized this early in his life (and mentioned it to him on several occasions) but nonetheless, he thought himself quite extraordinary for coming to grips with this startling self-realization. He had not gone to college (none would have him). He joined the army, so that he could have sex and get drunk and vomit for God. They made him run and shoot and fight and heave manly sighs, and he was happy—but not very. A man wrote a letter that said it was all right to kill the bad people (you could tell who they were). He was happy, very. He killed more people than anyone else, and he used fewer bullets; they called him the "conservationist." It was an honest living. He got to have sex and get drunk and vomit for God, and they fed him and gave him little pieces of stars and eagles and stripes and babies that were shiny when he held them up to the naked light bulb in the barracks. He was a hero. His face was everywhere. People shook his hand, and licked his blood-stained boots clean. They looked like new. He died in a cool blue hospital, that smelled like peppermint. Everyone cried and put his face on a stamp. And licked it.

Susan Arnold

Good Mother

The living room is vacuumed,
the annual report typed.
I'm so tired I could sleep
right here on the floor
in the corner. I am haunted
by nightmares they call life,
but what do they know?
Pancakes, prayers, and computers:
household words which have lost
all meaning, like at six years,
waking to find Father's hand
under the pillow with a dollar bill.

*If you don't go to sleep,
the Tooth Fairy won't come.
Good night Prayers?
Sleep tight Brushed teeth?
Don't let those bed bugs bite
I curl up holding the teddy bear
I swear talks, musing the pillow
to fit under my neck,
dreaming of money and teeth
and sweet things,
like Mother who gets up at 7:00
to make silver-dollar pancakes
that smile and ooze with goodness*

My daughter thinks I'm perfect,
my husband knows I'm not.
Ritualistically, as a tribe dances
around a circumcision victim,
I put a dollar
under the innocent's pillow,
checking internally to see
if I have Aunt Jemima's mix,
only to know that we intentionally
hurt those we love.

Junie Speight

Emotional Exhibition

you painted me a picture
each brush stroke— an emotion
it hangs over my bed
now

even love
is public

Julia Andrews

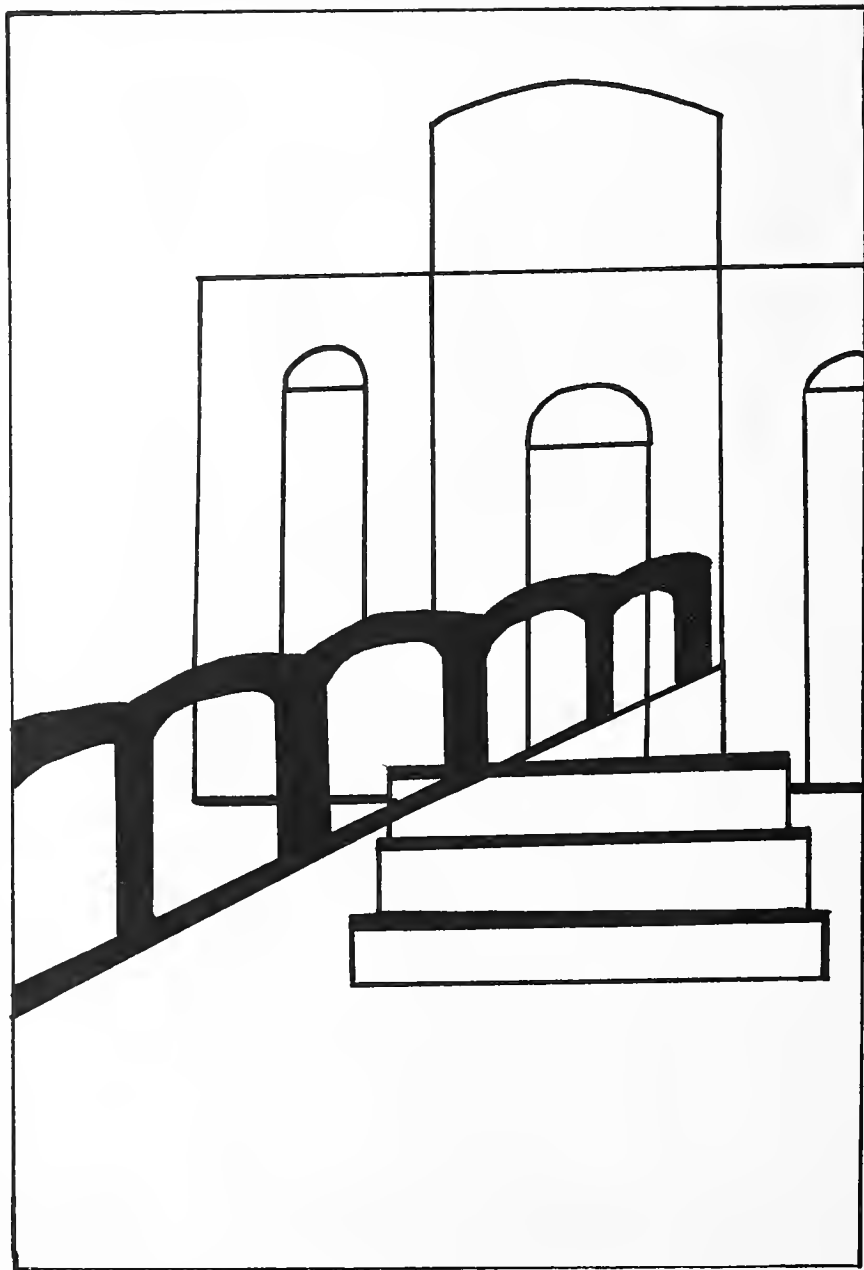
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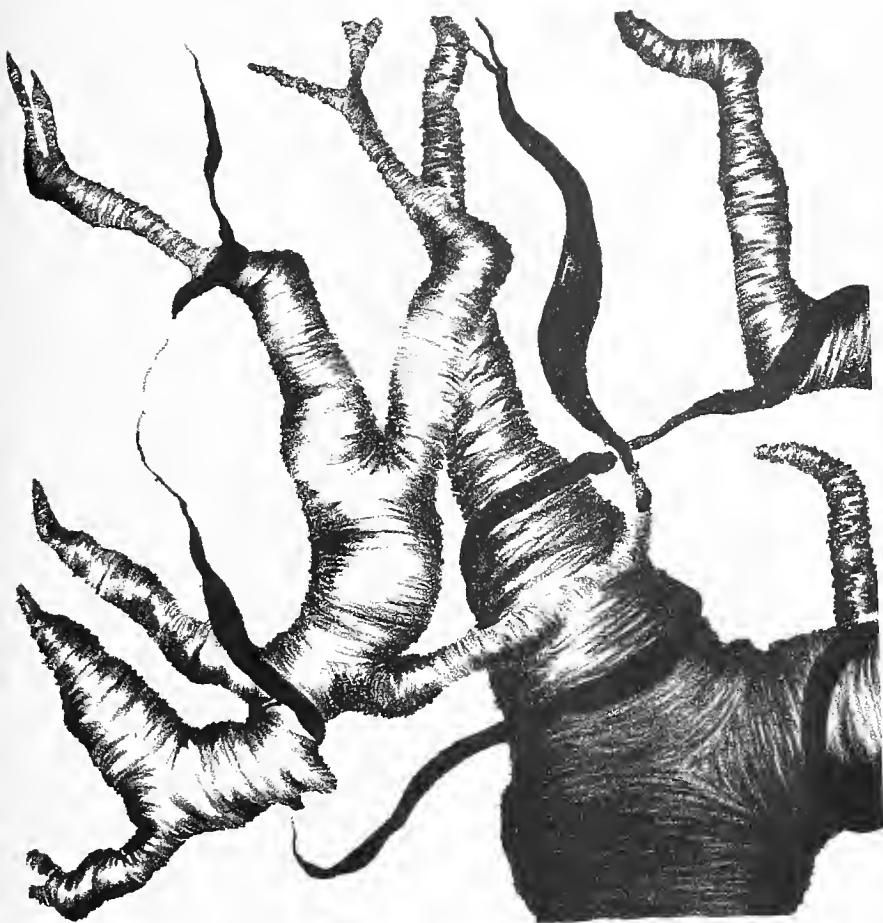




Stacy Lee

Hoops in Motion



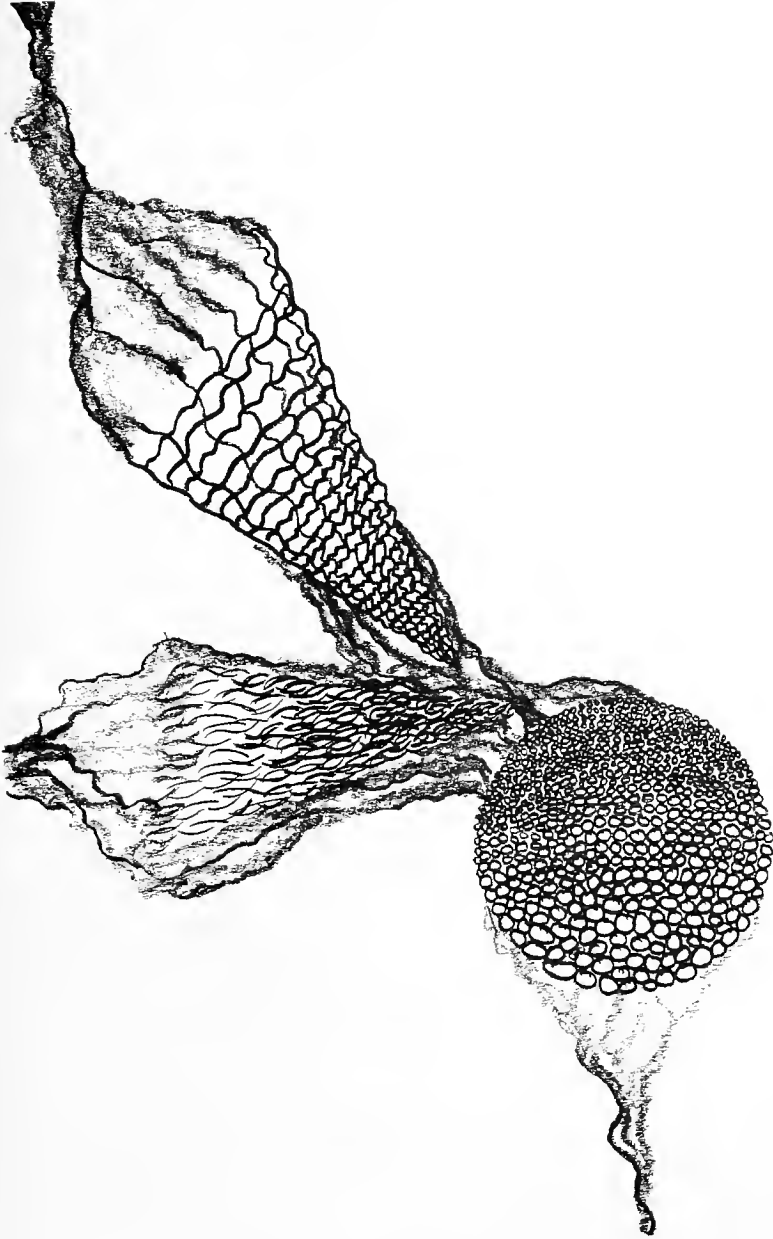


Kira Flores

The Three Dancers



Woman Created by Lightnin'



Melissa Carrington

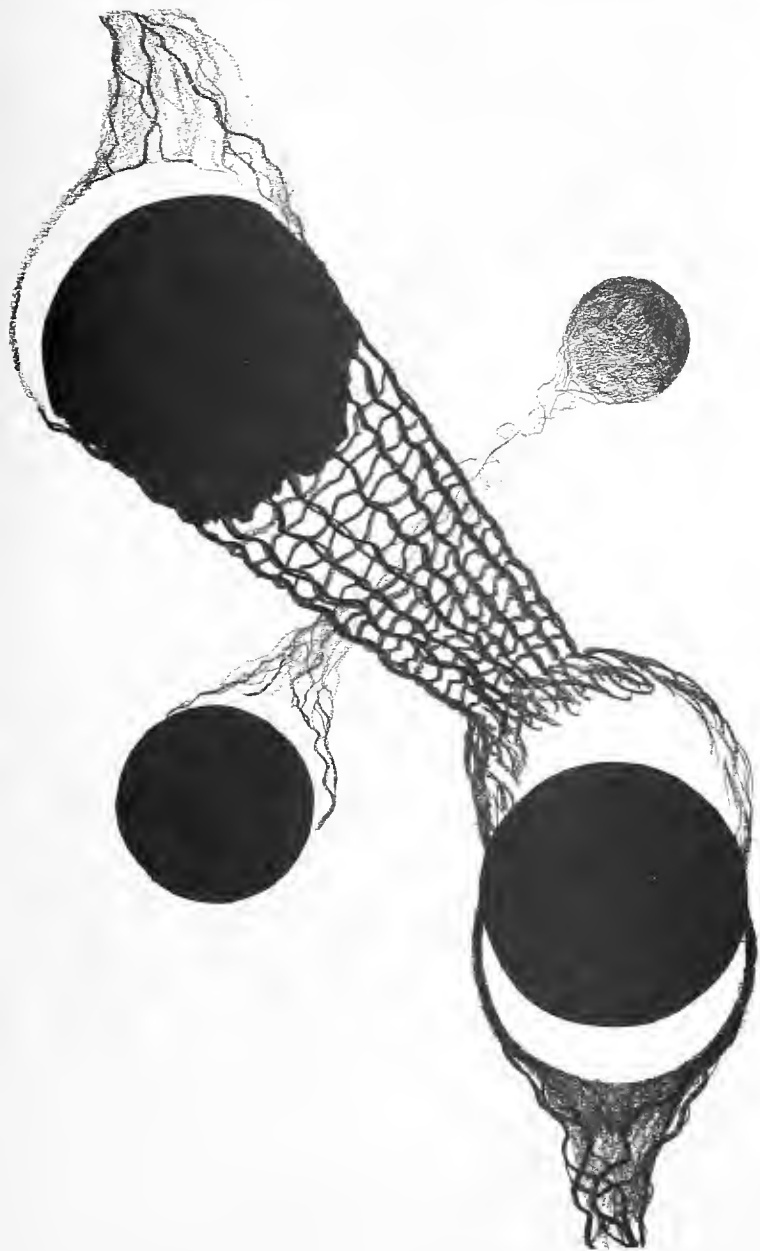




Cary Hardin

Shriek





Melissa Carrington



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